Human Nature and the Good

Critical Review

An Interdisciplinary Journal *of* Politics *and* Society

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Ronald Beiner

HERMENEUTICAL GENEROSITY AND SOCIAL CRITICISM

According to one model of social theory, the social theorist seeks to give as rich an account as possible of a society's own self-understanding or self-interpretation. The second model, by contrast, involves challenging *the society's self-understanding on the basis of a radical vision of ultimate standards of judgment. Charles Taylor claims that neither of these models should be privileged over the other, that both are equiprimordial ways of theorizing social life. However, Taylor* does *privilege the first model in his own practice of social theory—which can be summed up in the phrase, "the rhetoric of understanding."*

It is possible to read Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self* as a magisterial attempt, not only to respond to the whole range of debunkers of modernity, from Adorno on the left to Allan Bloom on the right, but to respond as well to the postmodern notion that we now inhabit a universe of metaphysical groundlessness, decentered selves, and deconstructable traditions.

Taylor's intention is to argue against the postmodernists that, far from being centerless selves stitched together from bits and pieces of deconstructed traditions, we can, as modern selves, draw upon inner structures of moral aspiration as resources for a coherent ex-

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perience of our own selfhood. If it succeeds, Taylor's narrative of the modern self can refute the postmodernist claim that we must forsake the very possibility of a unified self nourished by unified traditions. In fact, what is claimed by the postmodernists is that this experience of fracture and groundlessness is not only the appropriate *description* of our current situation, but that we should welcome the postmodern situation as a *liberation* from metaphysically grounded visions of unified selfhood and unified tradition.

I think it is true that theory should avoid a reckless debunking of modernity as a whole; and Taylor seems to me completely right to challenge the postmodern vision as normatively attractive. But it may be suggested that in his effort to vindicate the dominant moral impulses of modern life, Taylor gives us a picture of our condition that is a little more reassuring than the contemporary situation actually warrants. In fact, Taylor's resolve to survey the modern landscape with a bountiful interpretive generosity (sometimes to the extent of giving the modern identity the benefit of the doubt) is dictated by his conception of what it is to do social theory; and it is precisely the latter that I wish to explore in this essay.

Reflexivity is inherent in the very enterprise of theory. That is to say, it belongs to the nature of theory for the theorist to reflect on what one is doing as a theorist, and to give an account of the character of one's activity as a theorist. I want to begin with a distinction that Taylor himself offers, in one of his essays, between two perennial archetypes of the practice of social theory. Not only will this provide a framework for thinking about Taylor's contribution as a theorist, but it will allow me to explore some of my own puzzles about what the activity of theory entails.

In "The Motivation behind a Procedural Ethics," Taylor sketches ideal types of two radically opposed conceptions of what it is to do theory (Taylor 1993a, 351–54). The first, which he labels "revisionist," is illustrated by Plato's political philosophy in *The Republic*. Plato resolutely rejects the quest for citizen honor that drives life in the Greek polis, and confronts this lived experience of the polis with an utterly revolutionary vision of human life and the human good. Taylor describes this as "the classic case of a revisionist doctrine": "The internal goods, the citizen dignity and fame, are savagely reinterpreted as a grasping after mere appearances, simulacra." The exemplar of the alternative conception of theory is Aristotle's critique of Plato, which is labelled "comprehensive" in the dual

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sense that it *encompasses* the full range of existing goods, and seeks to *understand* why these goods are experienced as good:

> We cannot just legislate the goods people are actually seeking and finding as goods out of court. What could the highest good be if it did this? On what basis could we establish a highest good that had this property? A theory of justice must begin with the kinds of goods and the kinds of common practices organized around these goods that people actually have in a given society. Ethical theory has to comprehend given practice; it cannot just abstract from it. (Taylor 1993a, 352)

Significantly, Taylor says that these archetypal images of theory present us with an impossible choice: "I do not propose to decide this [issue] by fiat in favour of Aristotle; there is no one-sided resolution of this conflict. We all must recognize allegiance both to the Platonic and to the Aristotelian sides of this dispute, both to the revisionist and the comprehensive approach" (Taylor 1993a, 354).[1] Notwithstanding this avowal of impartiality, however, I want to argue in what follows that Taylor, in his own practice of theory, is very much slanted to the Aristotelian model of comprehensive theory.

Here we need to engage the issue of Taylor's historicism, which is inscribed at the very core of his interpretive enterprise. The clearest and most forceful account of his basic enterprise is offered in section 19.2 of *Sources of the Self*, where Taylor gives an account of moral theory according to which moral truth consists in overcoming forms of blindness or distortion in our moral self-understanding.

> It is widely thought that no constitutive good could have such a fragile ontological foundation as this, a niche simply in our best self-interpretation. Unless it is grounded in the nature of the universe itself, beyond the human sphere, or in the commands of God, how can it bind us? But there is no a priori truth here. Our belief in it is fed by the notion that there is nothing between an extra-human ontic foundation for the good on one hand, and the pure subjectivism of arbitrarily conferred significance on the other. But there is a third possibility, the one I have just outlined, of a good which is inseparable from our best self-interpretation. (Taylor 1989a, 342)

This is undoubtedly a compelling picture of moral theory, but it

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contains a crucial ambiguity: What are the boundaries of the self that is submitted to this exercise in self-interpretation? Are we seeking to address the human condition globally, or are we more directly concerned with the conditions of modern selfhood as we now live it, on the basis of a specific history? Taylor's practice of interpretation in *Sources of the Self* suggests the latter.

In order to clarify what is at stake here, I want to supplement Taylor's distinction between revisionist theory and comprehensive theory by borrowing William Galston's helpful distinction between "deep description" and "wide justification"; in fact, I want to endorse Galston's conclusion that "the wide justifiers have the better case" (Galston 1991, 16). Galston defines deep description as "the elucidation of basic structures of moral belief within our political culture," whereas wide justification is associated with "the traditional philosophical effort to scrutinize the premises of a political culture in light of (the possibility of) transcultural standards." Beyond the various arguments that one might adduce on behalf of wide justification, I have a special reason for favoring it over deep description, namely my commitment to a certain kind of radical social criticism that, as I conceive it, depends on assuming a Platonic distance from shared identity, whether it is the local identity shared with members of one's own polis, or a much more broadly defined shared identity—say, that of Occidental modernity.

Here my concern is not with the whole range of forms of social criticism (encompassing not only the narrowly political arts of speech-making and pamphleteering but also novels, poetry, and all the visual arts); rather, I'm primarily concerned with one particular mode of social criticism, namely philosophy. A case needs to be made on behalf of the *philosopher* as social critic because, at least according to Michael Walzer's specification of the meaning of social criticism, Plato, Spinoza, Friedrich Schiller, Marx, Nietzsche, Walter Benjamin, and Roberto Unger are not to be considered social critics because they don't feel themselves obliged to address their projects of philosophical criticism exclusively to fellow citizens within the horizon of the concerns shared by some specific national community (see Walzer 1987).[2] Indeed, one might go so far as to say that as Walzer conceives social criticism, even Taylor himself counts as a social critic only when he writes a book like *The Pattern of Politics*, not one like *Sources of the Self*. If so, then it is no exaggeration

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to say that Walzer's account calls for a defense of philosophy itself as a practice of social criticism.[3]

Getting out of the Cave

I share the Socratic conception of philosophy defended by Galston in Chapter 2 of *Liberal Purposes*; that is, the conception according to which one necessarily starts off in some particular cave, and then does one's damnedest to rise intellectually out of that cave. In fact, I would say that Galston himself is perhaps not entirely faithful to the Socratic conception, for the Socratic ideal stipulates that one's first intellectual duty is to do battle against the underlying assumptions of one's *own* cave: those born in a *liberal* cave ought to devote their chief theoretical energies to challenging individualist assumptions, whereas those who find themselves initially in an illiberal cave are entitled to appreciate the virtues of liberal individualism. So, while in his role as a theoretician for Clinton's Democratic party, it is perfectly reasonable for Galston to write books defending liberalism, his first duty *qua* Socratic theorist is to challenge the reigning assumptions of a liberal society, not to give liberal citizens a better understanding of their own aspirations.

It may well be true that no theorist ever fully ascends out of the cave in which he or she starts—that is, *in some respects*, Socrates himself never did get out of that Athenian cave. But the intelligibility of the very *aspiration* to rise out of the cave depends on there being, in principle, an "outside" to which one might aspire. For theorists like Walzer and Richard Rorty, however, this "outside" is in fact a phantom; there is nothing outside the cave to which one might intelligibly aspire, and philosophy in the Socratic mode is therefore based on a delusion.

Now when one considers *Sources of the Self* and *The Malaise of Modernity* relative to this Socratic ideal of philosophy, the striking modesty of Taylor's enterprise will be, I think, apparent. For Taylor's project in those works is addressed to the inhabitants of modernity, bringing to their attention aspects of their own deeper existential commitments—features of the modern cave that have escaped the notice of the cave-dwellers. I should hasten to add, however, that I have no doubt that Taylor, unlike Walzer and Rorty, believes there to be an "outside the cave" that is an intelligible ob-

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ject of philosophical aspiration.[4] One might say that Taylor's undertaking in a work like *Sources of the Self* is to *mediate* between the Socratic perspective and the cave-dweller's perspective: his idea of "sources" indeed suggests that there are certain experiences within the cave that, rightly interpreted, offer intimations of what is outside the cave. One can, as it were, summarize the intention of Taylor's interpretive project by saying that what is attractive about the project of a self-interpretation of modernity is that it allows us to apprehend what is outside the cave without ever having to leave the cave.

Let us return to the alternatives of deep description and wide justification. In offering this distinction, Galston appears to have in mind primarily Walzer's practice of theorizing. Indeed, Walzer does seem single-mindedly committed to deep description, whereas Taylor, on the other hand, genuinely fluctuates between the two conceptions of theory. Still, I think it is fair to say that *Sources of the Self* is decidedly a deep description enterprise rather than a wide justification enterprise (although the community that is being favored with a deep description in that work is a rather large one, namely Occidental modernity as a whole, rather than some more specific national community, as in Walzer's work). It strikes me that what governs Taylor's work as a whole is the "historicist" presumption that if we make a sufficiently generous effort to understand why modern selves have come to be what they are and why modern moral aspirations have evolved in the direction that they have, these moral aspirations, and the selves they constitute, would show themselves as perfectly reasonable and worthy of aspiration.[5] (I qualify this as "historicist" in the Hegelian sense that the modern identity has unfolded as an intelligible story, and that it is the chief task of the philosopher to reconstruct this story in such a way as to exhibit its underlying rational intelligibility.) That, at least, is the intention that defines the theoretical-interpretive enterprise laid out so grandly in *Sources of the Self*. It requires a suitably ambitious narrative of the self-unfolding of modern identity, so that the moral *telos* of modernity can be apprehended as quite reasonable and indeed compelling. But, clearly, this Taylorian practice of comprehensive theory presupposes the historicist confidence that there really is an immanent narrative structure here rather than just a tissue of contingencies, and it may be hard to sustain this Hegelian or quasi-

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Hegelian confidence in the absence of Hegel's metaphysical assumptions.

John Dunn, with his usual incisiveness, explains the perils of this theoretical strategy of *tout compris*:

> Since [Taylor] is a Catholic he could scarcely fail to see some force to "demands that come from beyond our own desires or aspirations, be they from history, tradition, society, nature, or God." But, as well as being a Catholic, he is also very much a Romantic, [and therefore] he is strongly and personally committed to taking what comes from within our own desires or aspirations at least equally seriously. The resulting amalgam can readily offend most readers. His liberal critics among American philosophers do not care for the Catholicism, and believe that it leads him to espouse a potentially (or actually) oppressive relation between a society and its individual members. No doubt his Catholic critics are less enthusiastic about the Romantic elements, seeing these as licensing a *louche* and excessively aesthetic approach to the art of life, and a correspondingly enfeebled grasp of the requirements of God's Law. Either may well be partly right. (Dunn 1993, 20)

In the same vein, Dunn writes elsewhere of Taylor: "In the face of distressing choices he is apt to cling tenaciously to both horns of the dilemma, refusing, for what are often humanly excellent motives, to let either of them go." In this passage, Dunn goes on to cite Taylor's simultaneous commitment to "the modern post-Romantic project of self-exploration" and the premodern project of situating the self within an "objective order of natural and social value" (Dunn 1990, 186).[6] In these two commentaries, Dunn rightly identifies a crucial tension in Taylor's work between the enterprise of cultural interpretation that is contingent on the history of the modern self and, on the other hand, the intimation of a larger moral order that could furnish standards of transcultural judgment.[7] Taylor indeed seems inspired by the Hegelian impulse somehow to combine these two distinct endeavors, yet in the absence of Hegel's own philosophical commitment to a necessary coincidence of the larger rational order and the historically evolved articulation of selfhood, the tension persists.

This tension in Taylor's thought is directly relevant to my purpose in this essay because I want to suggest that these two poles of intellectual endeavor—justification by appeal to self-understanding

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and justification by appeal to a transcultural standard—are linked to the opposing conceptions of social theory that were presented earlier. Taylor's primary endeavor as a theorist, it seems to me, is to try to do the utmost interpretive justice to the aspirations of people in modern society *both* to express their individuality *and* to satisfy their longings for community. (In this sense, he is a communitarian *and* a liberal.) My own conception of theory, by contrast, is, I think, less geared to understanding and more geared to criticism: according to my conception, the primary duty of the theorist is to expose *both* the excessive individualism of modern life *and* the sometimes excessive demands of communal belonging (therefore I think of myself as antiliberal and anticommunitarian).[8] Yet it seems to me to go without saying that one cannot say in the abstract whether social practices demand interpretive generosity or severe critical scrutiny. Naturally, it all depends on the specific practices that present themselves for judgment. I don't propose to enter into this task in detail, since it would clearly be a vast undertaking. Instead, I want to make some very brief observations regarding three domains of human experience—family, religious commitment, and nationality—where Taylor's theoretical approach inclines him towards a rhetoric of understanding, whereas mine inclines me towards a rhetoric of criticism.

Family, Religion, Nationality

Let us start with the family. One of the leading intentions of *Sources of the Self* is to vindicate the move, certainly characteristic of the social experience of modernity, to focus human energies much more narrowly within the boundaries of domestic life. Taylor wants to argue that this transformation, relative to other epochs of Western experience, is not fortuitous or arbitrary, but is expressive of deep cultural currents in the evolving self-consciousness of the West, one of whose notable sources is, of course, the powerful legacy of Christianity.[9] But who is to say what will be the eventual cultural outcome of the historical evolution in attitudes towards domestic life? Suppose modern consciousness evolves in a way that privileges not the family unit in relation to larger structures of social life, but instead the individual unit in relation to the family. If the standard of theoretical judgment is simply the historically contingent evolu-

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tion of identity, why shouldn't this, too, be vindicated in the way that the cherishing of domesticity is vindicated in *Sources of the Self*? Anyone acquainted with the facts of contemporary life will know that this suggestion is not an idle hypothesis.

Taylor himself, at the margins of his narrative, makes sufficient acknowledgement of the fact that modern experiences of selfhood may well be evolving in directions he would not be eager to vindicate. For instance, he sometimes refers to modern "relationships," in quotation marks (Taylor 1989a, 106, 293, 305). What the quotation marks signify is nicely conveyed in the following crack by Allan Bloom—although Taylor would never allow himself to express himself as bitingly as Bloom does: " 'Relationships' are based on 'commitments,' as in 'I'm not ready to make a commitment' " (Bloom 1993, 14). As Bloom elsewhere puts the same point: "Commitment is a word invented in our abstract modernity to signify the absence of any real motives in the soul for moral dedication" (Bloom 1987, 122). At one point in *Sources of the Self*, Taylor concedes that our situation in the late twentieth century is such that aspirations to family intimacy and individualism, previously in harmony, have begun to fall into conflict, to the extent that "an ideology of 'self-fulfilment' militates against family life" (Taylor 1989a, 561n13).[10] What this really amounts to is an acknowledgement that aspects of contemporary life are such that the moral sources have a tendency to unravel. So, again, if it is the case that the basic justification for the prominence that domestic life has in the lives of modern individuals is simply that this is in fact how individuals inhabiting the modern dispensation have come to understand themselves and articulate their self-identity, then what objection could be posed if individuals within some new dispensation come to understand themselves and define their identity in a way that requires radical liberation from the moral constraints and social obligations of family life? Taylor's own observations in this area offer some grounds for suspecting that this new dispensation may already be upon us. Now, without doubt, to say that he himself would be rather uncomfortable with this outcome would be a massive understatement. But Taylor's tacit judgments in *Sources of the Self* merely confirm my point that one requires a more robust standard than his appeal to historically evolved self-understanding can supply.

While on the subject of individualism, it would not be out of place to remark that Taylor goes nowhere near as far as one might

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expect in criticizing individualist tendencies in modern life. One sees this especially clearly in the work where Taylor's sympathy for Romantic individualism is most evident, namely *The Malaise of Modernity*. In fact, I think that the basic theoretical thrust of that work is much better captured by its American title, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, for in the book Taylor devotes considerably more theoretical energies to trying to redeem the debased existentialist idea of authenticity than he does to cataloguing the discontents of modernity. I think it should be obvious that "authenticity" offers a very weak standard for making ambitious critical judgments concerning either a society's way of life or the individual lives that are lived within that way of life—unless, as I suggested earlier, one partakes of the Hegelian faith that the inner development of one's identity somehow coincides with a larger rational order that makes sense of the contingencies of one's psychic history. One may well concede, for instance, that the characters in Robert Altman's film *Short Cuts* are living lives that are authentically their own. But this is very far from giving one a basis for passing judgment on whether these are happy, flourishing, or attractive lives. I am, of course, well aware that Taylor's intention is to construct a radically reinterpreted and, so to speak, desubjectivized notion of authenticity. Yet it remains mysterious to me why a critic of individualism would want to salvage a theoretical category that has been so thoroughly compromised by radical subjectivism.

Let us now turn to another sphere of cultural life that raises the same problem of understanding versus judgment, namely religion. In *Sources of the Self*, Taylor consistently refers to the Enlightenment as the "unbelieving Enlightenment."[11] It is hard not to interpret this as a subtle reproach. The reproach becomes somewhat less subtle in a revealing little article Taylor wrote concerning the Salman Rushdie affair (Taylor 1989b). On the one hand, Taylor makes some concessions to Rushdie's defenders; he notes that there are certain indications of ambivalence in *The Satanic Verses*'s depiction of religious life; that the literature of unbelief doesn't merely perpetrate acts of cultural negation, but embodies a positive "spiritual" stance of its own; and that one cannot ask writers within that literature to maintain a hands-off policy towards religiously charged symbols without requiring that they betray their own vision of the world. Yet symmetrical understanding really isn't a possibility in the Rushdie affair; as in war, one really does have to take sides. And

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Taylor does take sides, when he charges that the whole tradition of antireligious literature to which Rushdie belongs (Taylor also cites Joyce) "has lost touch altogether with the possibility that religious symbols, stories, dogmas, might mean something very different to those who espouse them than they do to the rejecters . . . Rushdie's book is comforting to the western liberal mind [because it confirms] the belief that there is nothing outside their world-view which needs deeper understanding" (Taylor 1989b, 122). In other words, the onus of understanding falls predominantly on one side in this cultural struggle. For myself, I have trouble seeing why Rushdie is obliged to be fully understanding of how the faithful see the world, but the faithful are not obliged to understand how Rushdie sees the world.[12]

Salman Rushdie is a brilliant writer, and his book—contrary to the denunciations of it by guardians of the faith, many or most of whom haven't read it—is anything but a one-sided, Western-secular mocking of the religious yearning for "childlike security" (Taylor 1989b, 122), as even Taylor, to some extent, concedes (ibid. 119). On the contrary, the novel is a rich and sensitive exploration of how *both* ancestral rootedness *and* Western cosmopolitanism offer limited horizons and less-than-fully-satisfying experiences of life. Thus I find it a little surprising that Taylor, whose trademark is, after all, the rhetoric of understanding, is quite unmoved by the literary power of Rushdie's novel—which just goes to prove that one cannot understand everything and everybody, and that one therefore needs some ultimate normative basis for distributing one's understanding in the way that one does.

The broader problem is: If Taylor's ultimate standard is evolving historical self-understanding, why isn't the same principle of hermeneutical generosity applied to the rise of atheism within Western modernity? If, at least in the case of certain intellectual and cultural elites in the modern West, unbelief becomes integral to self-interpretation, why isn't this, too, treated as a moral source, as an "epiphany," and therefore favored with understanding rather than (muted) criticism? This problem, I think, actually points back to the tension in Taylor's thought highlighted earlier, namely, theory as the effort to understand the historically evolving and self-articulated identity of the modern subject versus theory as a quest for quasi-objective good. Now in this particular case, I (as an "unbeliever") would in fact be inclined to treat with more sympathy than Taylor

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that current of modern culture that is attempting to break free of theism. But my point here is not to challenge Taylor's theism, nor to try to mount an ambitious defense of the modern culture of unbelief. The point is, rather, that theory can never be fully exhausted by the historicist enterprise of merely interpreting how modern selves come to conceive their emerging identity (which is—in its leading conception—what *Sources of the Self* suggests is the way to practice theory). Unlike Taylor, I would like to see theory defined much more unequivocally in terms of reflection on the good rather than in terms of interpretation of the modern self, but as his own guarded criticisms of modern individualism and modern unbelief, I think, disclose, Taylor himself cannot avoid being drawn away from his apparent privileging of the latter conception of theory.

My third focus of inquiry is the problem of nationality. Just as Taylor seeks to redeem the ideal of family intimacy in the midst of its current travails, buffeted by the winds of contemporary individualism, and just as he seeks to redeem the claims of religion (despite its potential for bigotry and fanaticism) in the face of modern unbelief, so he seeks to redeem the claims of the nation (again, despite darker possibilities lurking within nationalism) in its quest for recognition of how nationhood constitutes identity. What "authenticity" is for individuals, in their efforts to assert their own uniqueness, "recognition" is for nations, in their efforts to assert *their* own uniqueness. Parallel to his affirmative stance toward religion in general, Taylor writes about nationalist aspirations without any questioning of the theoretical legitimacy of a people giving moral-political supremacy to the urge to affirm its own nationhood. But surely there are moral ambiguities here that deserve scrutiny. (Indeed, nationalism often generates something considerably more severe than mere "moral ambiguities," for despite whatever hopes one might have cherished for moral progress by the end of the twentieth century, what we have seen in various parts of Europe since 1989 reminds us that we have absolutely no guarantee that nationalism in its most virulent and illiberal forms cannot re-emerge even in societies that had made heroic efforts to transcend ethnic particularism.)

Taylor's writings concerning the political situation in Quebec offer an interesting illustration. Let us consider, for a moment, a grammatical curiosity that is encountered in certain political texts by Taylor, including his brief delivered on December 19th, 1990, to the Bélanger-Campeau Commission: namely, his use of the posses-

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sive adjective "our"—referring to the interests, claims, and sentiments of Québécois[13] (Taylor 1993b, 140–54). For a non-nationalist like myself, it may seem perfectly proper for Taylor to deploy the first person plural in addressing his fellow-citizens in Quebec; but it is by no means obvious that (real) Québécois nationalists would grant Taylor a full entitlement to use this "our." This is because, for a true nationalist, no matter how much Taylor himself construes his identity in Québécois categories or identifies with the cause of a safeguarded Québécois nationhood, there is a dimension of ascriptive membership that (within some indeterminate range) objectively determines the degree of Taylor's possible participation in Québécois nationhood. A similar kind of moral ambiguity is expressed in the fact that Canadian multiculturalism is considered more culturally threatening in Quebec than it is in English Canada—a fact to which Taylor refers in his essay "Shared and Divergent Values" (1993c, 161, 162), but whose moral implications he tactfully doesn't highlight.[14] If it weren't the case that the wish to affirm Quebec nationhood is in some tension with Canadian ideals of promoting multiculturalism, then Québécois nationalism really wouldn't be a form of *nationalism*, which it is—however much nationalists in Quebec may try to package it in "civic" rather than "ethnic" terms.

Again, Taylor's rhetoric is one of understanding rather than criticism, of deep description rather than wide justification. But the whole question of nationalism is one where deep description in no way suffices, and where the self-understanding of the collectivity needs emphatically to be challenged rather than merely understood. In December 1994, I went to Cuba for a little holiday. At my hotel, one of my fellow-tourists, a teenage girl who was also a fellow Canadian, was wearing a T-shirt that read "PROUD TO BE SERBIAN." Now, wearing such a T-shirt in 1994 is probably not quite as atrocious as wearing a T-shirt reading "PROUD TO BE GERMAN" in the 1930's; still, there is sufficient moral proximity in this analogy for one very much to prefer that she had been wearing a T-shirt that read, instead, "NOT PROUD TO BE SERBIAN." What is the function of theory in the face of the phenomenon of "Serbian pride"? Is it an exertion in the direction of *understanding*, or rather, does theory require alienation and distanciation? Dilemmas of this kind apply with greater or lesser moral urgency to *all* nationalisms. That is to say, they pose a problem with respect to nationalism as such.

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As we saw in considering the problem of religion, the demand that we accord deeper understanding to one side generally means that the opposite side gets a lesser share of understanding. So, just as Taylor demands deeper understanding of what moves religious communities while slighting the moral sensibilities of atheists, so, in this debate, Taylor urges greater understanding for the moral aspirations of Quebec nationalism without making a comparable effort to understand those for whom nationalism of any kind is a moral affront. I'm not suggesting that it is *ever* possible to be perfectly symmetrical in granting understanding towards opposing claims; rather, my thesis is that the rhetoric of understanding presupposes that we have already established an independent basis for assigning relative moral weight to these opposing claims (e.g., one makes more effort to understand nationalist aspirations in Quebec to the extent that their case has objective moral weight). Again, Taylor's appeal to the evolving articulation of historical identity, as if this sufficed, has the effect of evading this ultimate theoretical reckoning.[15]

As Dunn observes in one of the commentaries on Taylor cited earlier, the reason Taylor is committed both to the project of post-Romantic self-exploration and to the premodern quest for an objective human good is that both are in fact attractive visions of human experience, and it may well be that the richness of Taylor's own reflections on the human situation is connected precisely to his refusal to opt exclusively for one side at the expense of the other. However, as I have tried to illustrate by looking briefly at theoretical issues connected with the family, religion, and nationality, it is impossible to avoid ultimate theoretical judgments based on transcultural conceptions of the good. And however much we may deepen our understanding of the cultural history of the West as a result of this fruitful tension in Taylor's practice of theory, I strongly suspect (and believe I have good reasons for suspecting)[16] that in the final analysis, Taylor himself would not be averse to conceding that, as far as the decisive vocation of the theorist is concerned, transhistorical judgment must prevail over historicist understanding.

NOTES

1. If one prefers modern philosophical exemplars, one could substitute Nietzsche for Plato as the exemplary "revisionist" theorist and Hegel for Aris-

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totle as the exemplary "comprehensive" theorist. On Nietzsche's explicit repudiation of any aspirations towards comprehensiveness, see Gadamer 1993, 367 and the accompanying references, 373n6.

2. In a recent restatement of his argument (Walzer 1994, ch. 3), Walzer makes more explicit his challenge to philosophy as a form of social criticism: see, in particular, Walzer 1994, 50–52.
3. Among contemporary theorists, Walzer is certainly the one who has done the most to highlight the problem of the appropriate location of the theorist as social critic in relation to the political community that is being criticized. Thus, he writes: "When someone says 'our country,' emphasizing the possessive pronoun . . . the possessive pronoun is a problem. The more closely we identify with the country, so we are commonly told, the harder it is for us to recognize or acknowledge its wrongs. Criticism requires critical distance. It is not clear, though, how much distance critical distance is. Where do we have to stand to be social critics?" (Walzer 1987, 35–36). Walzer's own answer to this question is that the appropriate location of social criticism is firmly in the bosom of a shared culture rather than outside its boundaries. Or as he later puts the point: "critical distance is measured in inches" (Walzer 1987, 61). Again, it must be observed that a critical distance measured in inches appears to leave little scope for philosophy as a form of social criticism.
4. Walzer, of course, is explicit in insisting that the social theorist must forgo the aspiration to ascend from the cave: see Walzer 1983, xiv; see also Walzer 1994, 59. On Rorty and Taylor, see the exchange between them in Tully 1994, 20–33 and 219–22.
5. I cannot go along with Quentin Skinner's judgment (Skinner 1991, 145) that Taylor offers a "gloomy and vehement" critique of our contemporary age. I don't think Taylor would recognize himself in this characterization. But it surely says something about the character of Taylor's rhetoric that his work can present itself as a kind of Wittgensteinian duck-rabbit, seen both as a vehement critique of modernity by readers like Skinner and as a defense (albeit, a qualified defense) of modernity by readers like myself.
6. With the basic duality of his thought characterized in this way, Taylor's debt to Hegel seems unmistakable. The difference, of course, is that Hegel thought he had an assured way of surmounting the duality.
7. This tension can obviously be resolved in two different ways. Taylor can drop the appeal to binding conceptions of the human good, and simply tell a story about the vicissitudes of the modern identity. Or, as I prefer, he can talk less about being true to our authentically modern identity and put more emphasis on objectively desirable configurations of human life. But what he cannot do, in my view, is to go on equating conceptions of the good with conceptions of how we have come to be the particular selves that we presently are. (This is a paraphrase of Skinner's formulation: see Skinner 1991, 137; Skinner cites Taylor 1989a, 105. There, Taylor writes: "Our visions of the good are tied up with our understanding of the self."

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In a sense, the whole of the book is intended to elaborate the meaning of this claim.) My sense is that it is the determination to align "the Good" with "the (modern) self" that accounts for a certain lack of theoretical radicalism in Taylor's work, notwithstanding its astonishing breadth and intelligence.

8. Let me suggest an illustration of how one can be, as a social theorist, simultaneously anti-individualistic and anticommunitarian. It seems to me that one can be critical of those tendencies in liberal society that are at the furthest extremity from the quiet simplicity and nobility of the Amish way of life, while at the same time be critical of the constriction of individual personality that the Amish way of life enforces. Moreover, I don't see why one is, as a social critic, precluded from offering these opposing criticisms by the fact that one doesn't have ready-to-hand some ideal image of social arrangements that would constitute a golden mean between liberal dynamism and Amish conformity.
9. More specifically, it is, as Skinner emphasizes (Skinner 1991, 134, 138), the legacy of *Protestant* Christianity. This has the odd consequence that much of *Sources of the Self, qua* vindication of modern identity, reads like a defense of the *Protestant* experience of life! Perhaps this should not be so surprising, given the intimate causal relationship, which Taylor fully acknowledges, between Protestantism and the evolution of modernity. But in other respects, of course, it is surprising. In any case, it is hard to square with Skinner's suggestion (Skinner 1991, 147) that *Sources of the Self* is a work of Catholic philosophy (cf. Williams 1990).
10. Cf. Galston 1991, 293: "The core liberal notions of free choice and contractual relations . . . have permeated the previously sacramental understanding of marriage and the family. The notion of an irreversible, constitutive commitment has been undermined by notions of liberation and autonomy: 'Till death do us part' has been replaced by 'till distaste drive us apart.'"
11. See, for instance, Taylor 1989a, 265, 308, and 319; for some passages in which Taylor hints at his sense of alienation from the mainstream of post-Enlightenment intellectual life, see ibid., 17, 158, 234–35, 237, and 241.
12. For a point of view similar to Taylor's, although the antisecular animus is expressed much more stridently, see Dummett 1990. For the most part, my differences with Taylor have to do with choices of rhetoric and styles of theorizing rather than with the substance of our sympathies and practical judgments. However, his unsympathetic response to *The Satanic Verses* offers at least one instance where I think there is a genuinely substantive difference in our respective points of view. It is surely no coincidence that this disagreement is provoked by one of the rare texts in which Taylor drops his usual reserve in giving a public display of his theistic commitments.
13. But see also Taylor 1993c, 167, 171, 175. It is worth noting that Taylor *also* uses "our" to signal his membership in the *Canadian* political community:

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see, for instance, Taylor 1993c, 156, 158, 160, 170, 172, 173, 183; but see also Taylor 1993b, 143, 144. I am inclined to say that this dual usage is a sign of Taylor's failure to engage at the deepest theoretical level with the nationalist claim that one cannot have it both ways: one's deepest existential commitment is *either* to *la nation québécoise or* to a political community that is something other than the vehicle of national self-expression. (I'm not saying one should *accept* this nationalist claim; I'm saying one shouldn't fudge its intended force.)

14. Cf. Taylor 1993b, 153–54. In the latter text, Taylor urges Quebec to "move towards a more multi-ethnic model," just after insisting that the top priority is to establish political instruments by which to promote the uniqueness of Québécois identity. Taylor fails to note the tension between these two political objectives.
15. Taylor 1993c, 176: "Quebeckers . . . tend to opt for a rather different model of a liberal society [than that articulated in the procedural liberalism of Dworkin and Rawls]. On this view, a society can be organized around a definition of the good life." I agree with Taylor that public definitions of the good life are not in principle illegitimate; in fact, my view is that *all* societies define the good life, whether they own up to this or not. But nevertheless, I think one needs a separate argument (which Taylor doesn't supply) as to why it is commitment to the *nation* that is worthy of this public undertaking. I would also add the point that some Quebeckers have in mind a less liberal model of political community than other Quebeckers. (But there is greater acknowledgment of this latter point in Taylor's reply to Guy Laforest in Tully 1994, 254, 256.)
16. Consider, for instance, Taylor in Tully 1994, 224: "What moral realism requires is that one be able to identify certain changes [associated with the arrival of modernity] as gains or losses. I think we can, and also that there have been significant gains. I also think there have been losses" (Taylor's reply to Skinner). Presumably, these judgments concerning gains and losses appeal to a vision of what's good for human beings that is distinct from the historically evolved articulation of modern identity. In "Must We Return to Moral Realism?" (1991) Michael Rosen tries to nudge Taylor away from his self-conception as a moral realist. My purpose in this essay is to nudge Taylor in the opposite direction.

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Donald Kuspit

ART AND CAPITAL: AN IRONIC DIALECTIC

Martha Woodmansee's The Author, Art, and the Market *misunderstands the concept of autonomous art: it does not deny art's instrumental role in life, but rather reconceives this role as essentially psychological. The work of art becomes an emblem of self-control, and as such of great social import. But as Richard Goldthwaite's* Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy *suggests, this role is traduced by the tendency of capitalism increasingly to eschew the high art exemplified by the Renaissance when there is money to be made in unchallenging, trashy popular culture.*

There is more to Richard A. Goldthwaite's *Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy, 1300–1600* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993) and Martha Woodmansee's *The Author, Art, and the Market: Rereading the History of Aesthetics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) than meets the scholarly eye. They are polemical, revisionist tracts in the guise of erudite readings of important aspects of European civilization: in the case of Goldthwaite, the Italian Renaissance; in the case of Woodmansee, the inauguration of aesthetics in eighteenth-century Germany. They demystify

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these events, which have been regarded as great spiritual triumphs, by reading them materialistically—crassly and profanely, some would no doubt say: they show art to be market driven. Goldthwaite and Woodmansee do not simply argue, but convincingly prove, by delving into historical detail, that the idea of high art is commercial in origin, whatever its later defensive claims to parthenogenetic sublimity. It was part of the consumer revolution that was the Italian Renaissance, and which, later, such German authors as Lessing and Schiller wanted to be part of, if on their own superior terms.

For Goldthwaite, Renaissance consumerism was far from bad, however limited it was to the luxury market: that is, the wealthiest, most ambitious sector of society—aristocrats, churchmen, and perhaps, above all, upwardly mobile merchants. It was these grandiose consumers who spurred demand, and with it creativity and entrepreneurship. The Renaissance artist was in fact the first modern entrepreneur, indeed, the very model of the entrepreneur, because he was "in a position to move in aggressively and win a commanding position over the market" (138). Some artists "achieved the ultimate goal of selling themselves as . . . elite producers of unique products" (26).

> The new dynamic that came into play in the Italian marketplace opened up incomparable opportunities for producers—from painters, sculptors, and architects to modest potters; and they took the initiative with new ideas to shape taste and so arouse demand yet further, thereby gaining a certain control over demand. . . . Vasari incorporated these new market conditions in his concept of artistic progress, which he saw as arising out of the artist's struggle for a livelihood, the competition among artists, and the consequent sharpening of their critical faculties. (252)

This economic foundation is all but forgotten, as Goldthwaite observes, in the exaltation of Renaissance art in the museum. Decontextualized—removed from the palaces and churches it was made for, stripped of its service as a symbol and instrument of class and power, status and authority, civic pride and family privilege, that is, of everything that made it socially influential, not to say all too human—it becomes an idolized object of aesthetic devotion. It may seem to be immortal, but it has lost its identity. It can be abstractly contemplated, but for Goldthwaite this is a loss rather than a gain in

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significance, and a kind of self-deception. Removed from its role in human affairs and commerce, it is reduced to an equivocal source of rarefied experience. But such pure experience is all but empty. Goldthwaite is acutely aware of the irony of the situation:

> If, on the one hand, we decry what this consumerism has developed into in our own times, with its commodity culture of planned obsolescence, throwaway goods, and fashion-ridden boutiques, on the other hand we have enshrined its very spirit in our great museums. These veritable temples to the consumption habits of the past, where we worship as art one of the dynamics that gives life to the economic system of the West, mark the supreme achievement of capitalism. (254)

Art for Art's Sake

For Woodmansee, the market concerns of such authors as Schiller (he's the major enemy in her book) mock the spiritual pretensions embodied in their view of the work of art as a formal construction affording an aesthetic experience. Spiritual concerns are as novel—as autonomous and disinterested, or pure and detached (unworldly if not exactly otherworldly)—as market motives. In a brilliant piece of detective work, Woodmansee traces the origins of the spiritual conception—essentially that of art for art's sake—to a short essay entitled "Toward a Unification of All the Fine Arts and Letters under the Concept of Self-Sufficiency" that appeared in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* in 1785, five years before the publication of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, which philosophically reified, as it were—dare one say academicized?—the conception.

> In this essay a little-known figure in the history of aesthetics, Karl Philip Moritz, gave the first unequivocal and systematic expression to . . . our modern conception of the arts. Works of art, he argued . . . are "self-sufficient totalities" produced simply to be contemplated "for their own sake"—that is, "disinterestedly," purely for the enjoyment of their internal attributes and relationships, independently of any external relationships or effects they might have. (11)

This idea of art's aesthetic autonomy is, in its origins, as Woodmansee convincingly shows, "a displaced theology" (20). Since the

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eighteenth century, it has had a near monopoly on academic thinking about art, as she demonstrates in her examination of its influence on the New Criticism and professional aestheticians. Its importance is enormous: it was a

> radical departure from . . . two millenia of theorizing about the arts. For the arts up until this time had been perceived as intervening directly in human life—as imparting and empowering beliefs, as communicating truths (and of course also falsehoods) in a pleasing form—and their value and excellence as works of art had been measured, instrumentally, in terms of their success (or failure) in serving these broad human purposes. (12)

For Woodmansee the transition from the traditional to the modern conception of art can be clearly traced in Schiller's *Letters On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, which appeared in his journal, *Horen*, in the mid-1790s. The French Revolution was raging at the time, and Schiller thought the arts could serve the revolutionary effort to construct "true political freedom." This was "the most perfect of all the works" human art could achieve (quoted, 57). For the revolution had faltered, turning into a Reign of Terror—a new "rule of force," indicating "that men are as yet unequipped for self-rule" (59). Aesthetic education could come to the rescue, Schiller argued: it "can equip men for self-government." "Aesthetic education is to result in a rational state—a state governed by principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity." But by the end of the *Letters* Schiller had abandoned the idea of art's emancipatory purpose and replaced it with the modern formalist idea that the beauty of art is an end in itself, a "terminal value," as Woodmansee says (59). No longer a rhetorical device in the service of a social ideal, it became self-idealizing. " 'Freedom' has lost the distinctly political inflection given it at the beginning of the *Letters* and come to denote the kind of freedom to dream that is the consolation of the subjects of even the most repressive regimes" (59).

Thus Schiller betrayed the revolutionary cause, and Woodmansee cannot forgive him. Indeed, her analysis of his position, as fine as it is (it is not, in fact, quite as attentive and thorough as it seems to be), is tinged with damning bitterness and resentment. Woodmansee clearly has a leftist axe to grind—in her chapter on the origin of the "*other*, entirely separate and inferior . . . second,

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'women's' literature" (108), I can almost hear her attack our own repressive regime—but her main concern is to understand the reason for Schiller's change of mind and heart. She finds it, in another brilliant piece of investigation, in his "devastating review" (1791) of the popular poems of Gottfried August Bürger, who was, as Woodmansee says, "one of [the] most effective partisans" of "the instrumentalist principles that guided literary practice down through the eighteenth century" (59–60). She is clearly one of his fans.

The Rise of Popular Culture

Bürger's *Lenore*, "a chilling ballad about a girl carried to an early grave by the ghost of her beloved, . . . took England by storm in the 1790s," and inspired Wordsworth's interest in the ballad (60). Woodmansee offers a detailed analysis of the style and content of this popular, that is, people's poem—the only piece of writing to which she accords such an honor. She obviously admires it.

Why would Schiller attack it, and Bürger's whole oeuvre? Because Bürger's poems were extraordinarily popular and commercially successful, and Schiller hadn't had a commercial success since *The Robbers*. He was envious. He was trying to make a place for his own writing, and Bürger's poetry seemed to have taken over the literary scene. Schiller' aestheticism was an attempt to privilege his poetry by declaring its inherent superiority to Bürger's more democratically accessible, emotionally arousing ballads—they are among the precursors of our popular songs—and thus ensure himself a place in the economic sun. Woodmansee traces the ups and downs, the compromises and ironies, of Schiller's career. Desperate to be independent—to earn his living from writing, at a time when books were the hot new consumer product in Germany—he wrote some of his most important work, including the *Letters*, when he was supported by an aristocratic patron.

This, for Woodmansee, is a clue to their secret, and that of Schiller's review: they were both "counterrevolutionary." The review initiated his analysis of "the devastating effect of 'progress' on the individual psyche"—its detrimental effect on "wholeness of character"—that he brought to a climax in the fourth letter on aesthetic education (73). "Art alone . . . can heal the divisions that tear us apart both individually and socially," help us recover from the

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"alienation, dissension, and disintegration"—the "emptiness of spirit" ("depression," we would no doubt say today)—of modern life. This, for Woodmansee, is unrealistic and antimodern. For her, aestheticism or formalism remains an intellectual crime against humanity: it betrays the revolutionary ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity.

Art as a Cure for the Ills of Modernity

Woodmansee ignores Schiller's reading of the emotional effect of the modern world—confirmed, it seems, by the *Journal of the American Medical Association*'s December 1993 report on the epidemic of depression that follows in the wake of modernization—and gives short shrift to his idea of a therapeutic mission for art. (A precedent can clearly be found in Aristotle.) Indeed, she is so prejudiced against Schiller that she cannot help but distort his position even as she states it. She argues that he advocates a "*cerebral*" (and thus unpopular) poetry that will "elevate its users socially and distinguish them from the multitude of 'vulgar' readers" (77). She believes that for Schiller, "to 'idealize' [aristocraticize?] . . . means to purge one's verse of . . . affective qualities"—just those qualities Bürger's ballads possess.

But she completely misses the point of the quotation she uses to clinch her case against Schiller. The "purer and intellectually richer text for the outpouring of affects that seek expression in language—whether of love, joy, reverence, sorrow, or hope," makes the poet and the people who read the poem "master of these affects" (Schiller quoted, 77). When Schiller says that it will "make their rough, shapeless, often bestial eruption more noble while they are still on the lips of the people," he is not saying that the people—the people who rose up against the absolutist regime in France—are incorrigibly rough, shapeless, often bestial, but that emotions tend to be that way. Schiller's message seems to be that if one can control one's emotions, one can survive in the modern world. Poetry should be a source of ego strength, not simply the expression of emotion, which is what Schiller found in Bürger's popular poems. They have "sensuous richness" but lack "wise economy."

Woodmansee sees in Schiller a precursor of "today's conservative culture critics who confronted blues, jazz, or rock and roll" (79).

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(She names no names. Could she mean Adorno [1972, 113], who saw in the "irregular rhythms" of jazz "a helpless, powerless subject" who "adapts himself to the regularity of the total [social] process," and thus "confesses his own impotence," allowing him to be "accepted into the collective and rewarded by it"?) This seriously misrepresents Schiller's theory. He is attacking Bürger's poetry—and popular poetry in general—for doing just what Woodmansee deplores: offering the subjects of repressive regimes the illusory freedom of consoling dreams. This is what popular, or as we would say today, media art continues to do. It offers us self-expression, rather than models of the self-control we need to avoid victimization by our own emotions. With such self-governance, revolution against a repressive regime need not degenerate into a Reign of Terror, and thus would be truly liberating. Schiller did not abandon his emancipatory project, but conceived it more subtly than Woodmansee comprehends. Truly high art serves critical consciousness for Schiller, but in a way Woodmansee refuses to recognize. He was neither revolutionary nor counterrevolutionary, left nor right, but concerned to help the individual survive in a world increasingly indifferent—a world, as he saw it, in which the individual exists more for the collective than the collective for the individual.

Woodmansee completely misses the dialectical complexity of Schiller's position: he is not simply a naive formalist, obsessed with the intricacies of art's construction and, however unconsciously, equating the "distinguished" experience it affords with social distinction. High art is not simply displaced privilege—a kind of noblesse oblige, often with a disarming popular touch, and part of the flair with which the elite personalize as well as publicize their rule. It is, in its very immanence, a means of psychological instruction. By conceiving of form as a way of governing emotion, Schiller gives the traditional idea of art's instrumentality a new lease on life. He does not abandon it, as Woodmansee thinks, but tries to make it relevant to modern life, which arouses all kinds of self-divisive emotions. It is form that has the power to change our relation to emotion, and as such to "intervene in human life," to use Woodmansee's phrase. Narrative lacks this power, for, however exciting—as in the case of Bürger's *Lenore*—it simply reflects the reader's everyday emotions back to him or her, thus confirming the psychological status quo, and, in doing so, does not afford any control over or perspective on them.

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For Schiller, form communicates the psychological truth that one needs to govern or form oneself—give form to the emotional content of one's life—before one can help govern or form society. For Woodmansee, art's social and political (collective) use subsumes its psychological (individual) use: Bürger's *Lenore* is important because it is a people's poem, that is, it gives voice to the people's feelings. The individual can control his or her feelings, which differentiates him or her from the people, who are, as *Lenore* shows, doomed to express them without comprehending them, and are thus victimized by them. For Woodmansee, the people count more than the individual. Society shapes the individual (and his feelings) more than the individual shapes society. But what is it, then, that counts? That the people relieve itself of its shapeless collective emotion, at whatever cost? *Lenore* makes it clear that the cost may be its destruction, for it is implicitly an account of suicide because of the loss of a lover to war. If the heroine had mastered the despair this loss caused her, she would have mourned him rather than committing suicide. The people destroys itself; the individual can preserve herself.

Ironically, Woodmansee's attack on Schiller plays into the hands of the aestheticians she discredits as blind to the "broad human purposes of art." She also makes it clear that she, as much as the aestheticians, betrays—falsifies—the meaning of the formalist revolution, as it can be called. Carefully read, that "little-known figure in the history of aesthetics" (Woodmansee 1994, 11), Moritz, as well as Kant and Schiller, remain instrumentalists, but with a new awareness of art's *psychological* instrumentality, as becomes evident in Kant's discussion of the sublime. Schiller's importance is that he was able to connect this instrumentality to modernity. It may be that Schiller was driven to this new (yet not so new) idea of art's human use because of economic and social desperation, that is, his determination to endure in the economic art jungle of his day and his wish to privilege himself as a spiritual aristocrat, superior to the mundane nobility on which he was dependent for patronage. It may be that he was trying to console his wounded pride. But the position he arrived at is more important than his motivations (and motivations are not only economic and social). The end of the *Letters* does not really betray the ideals of the French Revolution supported and praised at their beginning, but finds the "missing emo-

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tional link" that makes all the difference between failure and success in implementing them.

The Challenge of High Art

For Schiller, high art cannot help but be difficult, unpopular, and challenging—unlike Bürger's easily comprehended poetry—because educating the emotions, in contrast to expressing them, is difficult, unpopular, and challenging. Like liberty, equality, and fraternity, self-rule must always be worked at. The last of these can easily be lost when the first three are at risk, for it is their foundation. Civilization itself is endangered, for self-rule is its emotional basis. What the French Revolution made clear, at least to Schiller, is that the emotions *had* to be educated if the human values of the Revolution were not to be forfeit—if the Revolution was not to be a Pyrrhic victory, as the barbaric Reign of Terror suggested it was.

Schiller saw the irony of the Revolution: its cause was just and good, but it destroyed itself because of human failure—lack of mercy and compassion for its enemies, that is, true "noblesse oblige": the nobility of the soul. It degenerated into the usual ruleless war of all against all—the enemies of the Revolution were everywhere, a not unfamiliar paranoid party line—because human beings could not rule themselves. Self-rule was all the more necessary—indeed, the saving grace—at the moment when history had finally declared that all human beings were entitled to what had hitherto only been the privilege of a powerful, wealthy few: the universal right to become and be treated as human. Ordinary people, not just aristocrats, were entitled to dignity. Whatever their position in society, people had to be respected. But what if they did not respect themselves? What if their emotions were out of control? Then they destroyed their potential for human dignity. Unable to rule their emotions, they were susceptible to being swayed by them, ruled by the violent emotions of the moment. And to being ruled—dominated, manipulated, mistreated—by others through their emotions. This is how Schiller understood the abortive course of the French Revolution.

Similarly, the American founders thought that one had to have a certain dignity to participate in government (even if they didn't extend the possibility of that dignity to their slaves). One had to have

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enough self-respect and self-control to cooperate with other human beings for the betterment of society: "self-improvement" was the cornerstone of social improvement. The Declaration of Independence proclaims the individual's dignity, and the Constitution that of the collective and the governing process. Both documents imply the universal human right to dignity, and suggest the conditions for its realization. There is of course no guarantee that, given the opportunity to act with dignity, people will do so, emotions being what they are. In the end, as Schiller suggested, only their highly personal will to govern themselves can make them do so. Art, he thought, could strengthen and guide them in that direction, through its own model of control. Thomas Jefferson seemed to have had a similar idea, as his architectural designs suggest.

For Schiller, then, the aesthetic is therapeutic: aesthetic education is instruction in emotional health. The complicated formal integrity of the self-sufficient work of art symbolizes the ideal integrity of the self-knowing self. For Schiller, the fine arts at their best—poetry especially—civilize the emotions. Through them we experience emotions, often intensely, but we need not be overwhelmed by them, because we can give them a kind of aesthetic form: this is a kind of cure. Schiller is arguing that to be truly educated—truly human and mature—means to understand and control one's emotions. Even intellectual maturity is easier than that. Emotional maturity requires developing a critical consciousness of the infantile emotions even adults continue to have. Such understanding is a privilege and luxury few—certainly not the angry people who make social and political revolutions, and want to govern in place of a government they experience as failing them (as no longer of and for all the people)—have attained. Is art a shortcut to its acquisition?

Schiller implies that the unconscious reason we elevate art socially and commercially is that it is emotionally "elevating." For him art's social and commercial distinction is secondary to its formal difference, which is of value because it makes an emotional difference. To separate the organization of form from the organization of emotion, regarding form as a purely intellectual matter ("cerebral," is Woodmansee's accusatory term), obscures this crucial connection. (If Schiller's notion of art's effect is "cerebral" and "idealistic," then so are Woodmansee's notions of the people, liberty, equality, and fraternity. What do they mean in concrete social practice?)

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Schiller clearly saw that the modern collective could crush and deplete the individual emotionally, and threatened to do so literally, as the Reign of Terror demonstrated. He was aware that the leaders of the Revolution gave license to "rough, shapeless, often bestial" emotions. Indeed, they fueled it. I believe he sensed that catharsis had diminishing returns, leaving one with a sense of emptiness and futility: Bürger's *Lenore* indicated as much. His conception of art's value as a means of self-government remains a minority, and some would say a naive and utopian, position today, certainly among academic aestheticians, who tend to oscillate between neo-formalism and social constructionism. Both schools miss the emotional point of art. However, Schiller's basic ideas have become pro forma among psychologists and psychoanalysts, theorists as well as practical therapists, as no doubt might be expected.

More importantly, perhaps, it seems clear that the people who flock to the museums—in New York, as was recently reported, more than attend all the city's sporting events combined (Cronin 1995)—are looking for emotional succor. They're hardly all academicians, aestheticians, and therapists. Certainly most are only superficially familiar with and no more than nominally interested in tracing the official course of art history. They may at first imagine that looking at art makes them as fashionable and feverishly glamorous as it is supposed to, but such fantasies quickly fade in these skeptical times. No, they go more for emotional than intellectual and social reasons. They want something "spiritual." They are refugees from television and the movies, and they come to the temples of art as to an oasis in a desert, or to find sanctuary, as in the temples of antiquity. It is not clear to me that they find what they are looking for, but it is worth noting that they want "something more" from life than what life itself—everyday life—has to offer. Indeed, they want to be cured of its emotional effect on them.

What they ultimately want is a certain sense of self. Art is surely an uncertain means to this end: self-transformation. At its very best, it is no doubt what Heinz Kohut calls a (substitute) "selfobject," but whether it is at its best or not depends on whether or not the individual is willing to be at his or her very best. Schiller, I think, overstates art's power: he believes it can never fail to effect a change for the better in the human psyche. In fact it may do so temporarily, but its good effect wears out without hard psychic labor. Moreover, to claim that true art is a means that never fails to reach its psycho-

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logical end begs the question of the *truth* of art. One of art's functions is to make what Stendhal called a *promesse du bonheur*. But it can never keep its promise. The illusion of happiness it creates is, to my mind, the afterglow of its sublimation of the feeling of misery: to bring Charles Brenner and D. W. Winnicott together, the sense that the inner catastrophe has already happened and is irreversible. Art is thus a negative happiness, as it were—the shadow of a happiness that doesn't exist.

The Psychological Character of Renaissance Art

The conception of art as psychologically instrumental, a conception which Schiller clearly strengthened, haunts Goldthwaite's book as well as Woodmansee's. The consumer revolution was also a psychological revolution: the "consumption habits" of the wealthy and the "consumption model," as Goldthwaite calls it, that emerged during the Italian Renaissance, led to a new sense of self, to humanism. The feeling of full humanity conferred by art was a privilege of wealth. For Renaissance art involved a revolutionary effort to engage the individual directly: "to enhance the efficacy of images in inviting the observer to respond," which opened up "powerful new rhetorical possibilities." "Panel painting in particular, by freeing the painted image from both the strictly liturgical context of the altar and from the narrative context of mural painting, had a potential for psychological meaning heretofore unknown" (139). The effort to actualize that potential, by means of new rhetorical devices, continues to motivate art, and has come to be understood as the essence of artistic creativity.

Again and again Goldthwaite emphasizes that Renaissance painting involves "the viewer in an intimate and private psychological experience" (143). Indeed, as a result of the Renaissance, it came to be recognized that "images could . . . threaten the moral health of the soul." In fact, "sixteenth century priest-confessors had come to regard sight as the sense most susceptible to sin and images as the occasion for the most serious sin they had to deal with—lust" (144–45). At the same time, images could do moral and intellectual good. They could be "loaded . . . with complex ideas," and used to make them convincing (146). Thus, the "pleasure of beauty" could have positive moral, emotional, and intellectual purposes. Perhaps

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the most eloquent part of Goldthwaite's book is his account of the way art, having acquired power over the emotions, and thus itself having become as seductive as the wealth which supported it and which it represented (is that the real reason art is treated so piously?), became a subject of heated debate and social repression. Art's association with wealth and emotion—its doubly persuasive power—remains a constant today, and the debate continues.

Goldthwaite and Woodmansee vigorously remind us that art does not exist in an aesthetic vacuum, and that the aesthetic itself is not as vacuous as it has been made out to be by philosophical purists. But most importantly of all, they show the formative role of the market in the production and distribution of post-medieval art, and in the modern understanding of art as self-sufficient and, in a sense, self-generating. They make it clear that whether we deplore the market and its products or not, we are all beholden to it. Whether we think of it as catalyzing what can be called progress or as insidiously betraying and falsifying humanistic ideals, we all live by it. In these books the market and modernity are all but synonymous, and there is no defense against either.

Art and Current Capitalism

The issue the books sidestep even as they raise it is why capitalism has tended, since the Renaissance, to heavily invest in a popular culture that, since Bürger's day, has increasingly "trashed" society—life itself—as well as high culture. It was the alignment of capitalism with an ever-trashier popular culture that Schiller, however unwittingly, tried to combat. Goldthwaite thinks the Italian Renaissance avoided this conjunction because its capitalists were civic humanist, upper-class consumers of luxuries. But this golden age of the capitalist commodity culture is, apparently, gone. Something has gone seriously amiss with capitalism: our "commodity culture of planned obsolescence, throwaway goods, and fashion-ridden boutiques" (254) has turned the commodity culture of the Renaissance upside down—vulgarized it. (In contrast, Woodmansee seems to believe that vulgar commercialism is acceptable so long as it serves the people by expressing their feelings, or rather by manufacturing their dreams for them, the way Hollywood does.)

To be parochial about it, why has "corporate America"—pre-

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sumably on the capitalist cutting edge—decided that "cultural decay is very good business," as Thomas Frank puts it (1995, 25)? Why does it endorse a culture that degrades rather than enables and ennobles the human? Why has capitalism joined forces with a culture of stylized nonconformity, simpleminded rule-breaking, and self-promotional dissidence? Instead of serving self-preservation, popular culture willingly sacrifices the self to a decadent fantasy of instant utopia. Is it because of cynical profiteering that "the counterculture has become safe for General Motors"? Or is it simply because "of the extension of the rules of fashion and obsolescence into almost every imaginable human pursuit?"

No doubt, both. But there is also another, more explicitly psychological reason why capitalism has become allied with trash culture (however much it gives lip service to high culture), especially a trash culture that is adolescent, not to say infantile, in outlook: We need to be convinced that capitalism is "fun," or at least not a threat to our well-being. Capitalism is no longer supposed to be hard work, as it once was; indeed, it is supposed to be no work at all, but sheer pleasure. No longer are capitalists Calvinists eager to be among God's elect; instead they are sirens of instant paradise. For this marketing strategy to work well, we have to be emotionally primitive enough to believe in paradise, and part of trash culture's purpose is to ensure that we are.

Capitalism at its most advanced offers this promise of instant gratification; trash culture is institutionalized instant gratification. The price of such gratification is the loss of self-control. Moreover, gratification, being instant, is short-lived—but not to worry, there's more readily available. Trash culture produces limitless amounts of it, and it's only "trash" if you have some problem with instant gratification. High art's *promesse du bonheur* can't compete: who wants or needs self-control when you can become completely happy by losing all control? Trash culture is addictive, and capitalists love addicts: they're the ideal customers. So capitalism joins forces with trash culture to destroy human dignity, indeed, to eliminate the very idea and possibility of it. Dignity is no longer the hard-won privilege of the few, but a mark of their stupid resistance to the pleasure of instant gratification.

Capitalism now encourages not self-control but self-expression, narcissism, and anti-sociality. It has become inimical to civil society and self-respect in the Renaissance sense. Capitalism thus signals, as

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Heinz Kohut (1977, 286) thinks modern art does, the core psychological problem of modernity: the narcissistic vulnerability of what he calls "Tragic Man," in contrast to the ego conflicts of "Guilty Man." In a sense, the Renaissance triumphed over guilt by sublimating desire into civil and religious-minded art, achieving a rare sense of socially integrated and adapted selfhood, while in modernity the self has become "enfeebled" and "fragile," even "decomposing" and "empty," to use Kohut's language. No doubt there are all kinds of reasons this has happened, including, as Stephen M. Johnson (1994, 102), among others, has suggested, "the vulnerability of the nuclear family in our highly mobile industrialized culture." In any case, the self's relentless pursuit of instant gratification suggests its desperate need to fill itself, and its failure to do so. Trash culture simultaneously caters to and reflects this need.

It does so largely by being a culture of entertaining spectacle that puts us in a passive, worshipful position. It casts its magical spell by expecting nothing from us while giving us everything: every spectacle is ideally a cornucopia of instantly gratifying goods—a comprehensive paradise, satisfying all the senses. It is polymorphously perverse in its effect. Positioned to enjoy a spectacle, we are completely passive—tragic infants waiting to be fed. We can only enjoy a spectacle—experience it as instantly gratifying—if we suspend psychic labor. In contrast to high art, entertainment, as Hanna Segal (1991, 94) argues, does not stimulate and demand psychic work, but rather induces daydreaming. Daydreaming is a defense against reality and its unpleasantness, and can easily become pathological (104).

Capitalism, I am suggesting, invites the consumer to suspend adult critical consciousness (i.e., maturity) by putting her in a state of daydreaming. The trash culture of entertaining spectacle—including, as I have suggested, the spectacle of treating society (the audience) and life itself (sex, for example), as trash—is the instrument by which it means to do so.[1] The entertaining spectacle is the ultimate commodity, and all commodities must seem to be part of an entertaining spectacle, such that they are spectacular and entertaining and polymorphously perverse in themselves. Thus art becomes the most spectacular commodity of all—all the more so when, like Warhol's work, it glorifies trash culture, if also, at times, ironically trashing it.

Where, in the Renaissance, capitalism served the reality principle, and wealth was a means to individual and social ends, in our society

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capitalism serves the pleasure principle, which is equally indifferent to individuals and society. In the Renaissance, wealth was an instrument of individuation and socialization, especially as embodied in art. In our society art is a form of wealth, if also the ironic sign of a nominal individuality and a superficially "civil" society. This is not simply because consumers have become more easygoing—not simply because they don't spend any psychic work buying commodities, and thus buy indiscriminately and mindlessly in search of instant gratification—but because in capitalist society the consumer is encouraged to enjoy the spectacle of consuming itself. Consumption has become the entertaining spectacle towards which civilization was presumably heading all along, even if entertaining spectacle is pseudo-civilized rather than overtly barbaric. Thus capitalism symbiotically merges with trash culture, which has mastered the art of entertaining spectacle.

As Goldthwaite shows, in the Renaissance, when capitalism was emerging, it aligned itself with the emerging sense of the human. Renaissance art fostered and demonstrated the psychic work necessary to create self-ruling human beings. Today, capitalism has aligned itself with the most decadent, self-indulgent, dehumanizing tendencies in society—George Frankl (1992) has spelled out their significance[2]—showing its own decadence. High art continues to be supported, but largely as an investment promising enormous returns, if also as token proof of humanity and civilization. The chairman of Disney recently said that its success was due to its emphasis on the "human element," vaguely defined as "emotion" (quoted in Powers 1995, 7). This not only means that humanism has become a commodity, a selling point, but that emotion has become meaningless, certainly in comparison to the weight of meaning it had for Schiller. If consumers are expected to accept the cartoon Pocahontas as the embodiment of their dignity and humanity, their sense of self and their complicated emotions, then they are expected to betray themselves. Clearly they have been betrayed.

It may be that capitalism can only survive if it encourages regression and infantilizes the consumer. But the paradoxical emotional consequences of its merger with, and its promotion and capitalization of, trash culture—whose basis is the abandonment of self-rule—are everywhere around us. Alienation and disintegration, self- and social division, and lack of wholeness of character, seem greater than they were in Schiller's day and age. Capitalism's al-

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liance with trash culture suggests that it is no longer a humanistic force for the good, as it was during the Italian Renaissance. In short, it seems to have lost its idealism and become cynical, which suggests that power over human beings has become more important to it than the beautification of human life.

NOTES

1. See Debord 1983 for a discussion of the special relationship between capitalism and spectacle.
2. Frankl thinks that modernity began as "the vision of a free and expansive humanity, liberated from the strait-jacket of convention, [but] gave way to a vision of a world in which the human being had disappeared" (164). "A declaration of war against the cultural Superego" became "a demand for a right to express any impulse previously considered taboo," and finally an attack on "sublimation itself, the very foundation of culture" (171). Without barriers, such as superego and ego control, the satisfaction of "aggressive urges" becomes "an end in itself" and "anal impulses . . . humiliate and vilify everything that is considered normal or decent" (172). Trash culture—which capitalism has helped make mainstream—is a spectacle of aggressive urges and anal impulses, and capitalism, in assimilating it, declaring that nothing is taboo, elevates these urges to paramount status.

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WHAT IS THE GOOD SOCIETY FOR HOMINOIDS?

In Sick Societies, *Robert Edgerton argues that the longstanding principle of cultural relativism is misguided. In its place, he claims, we need to evaluate both traditional and modern societies in terms of their commitment to providing a satisfying "quality of life" for their members. This essay takes up the merits of Edgerton's thesis by using primate data to analyze and consider human nature, the adaptation thesis, the nature of culture, and, on purely hominoid grounds, the "good" society for humankind.*

> Now always and everywhere, there arises among men a theory conforming to their practice.
>
> —Herbert Spencer, 1892

For nearly a century, cultural relativism has guided research on non-Western peoples. This principle was originally advanced to offset the "ethnocentrism" of nineteenth-century scholars, whose application of the comparative method and belief in a unilinear scale of moral and social progress led them to grade aboriginal societies as "savage" and "barbaric" steps on the road to modern, Western beliefs and values.

With the demise of classic evolutionary theory, early twentieth-century anthropologists constructed new conceptual frameworks

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that required the "Culture" concept to undergo a radical transformation. As originally defined by Edward Tylor (1871), "Culture" had referred to "one grand complex whole," and included all material and non-material achievements of humanity, so that particular achievements signified low or high grades of Culture.[1] The new anthropological strategies, in comparison, adopted a less monolithic outlook and began to view *each* society as having its own distinct cultural tradition which should be studied, in its natural setting, as an integrated whole. In American anthropology, for example, Franz Boas's "Historical Reconstruction" was a strictly culture-bound approach that emphasized the developmental and adaptive aspects of a culture. In British anthropology, Bronislaw Malinowski and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown founded distinctive brands of "Functionalism," an approach that emphasized the systemic and functional aspects of a culture (for historical overviews see Stocking 1974; Turner and Maryanski 1979).[2]

While these approaches differed in the questions they asked, the problems they investigated, and the conclusions they drew, each incorporated a creed of practical relativism which averred that the cultural traits of all societies be treated with scientific detachment, no matter how peculiar, esoteric, or iniquitous they might appear to the outside observer. In American circles, growing apprehension over "hidden" ethnocentrism led some Boasian anthropologists to posit a more extreme *ethical* (as opposed to cultural) relativism which denounced even the possibility of universal standards whereby an outside observer might assess cultural practices as "right," "wrong," "normal," or "abnormal." As Ruth Benedict (1934, 44) wrote in what became the authoritative work on relativism, *Patterns of Culture*: norms and practices are dependent upon no absolute standard, but are subject only to the "unconscious canons of choice that develop within a culture." For Benedict, "no man ever looks at the world with pristine eyes. He sees it edited by a definite set of customs and institutions and ways of thinking . . . [and] . . . he cannot go behind these stereotypes" (ibid., 2). Similarly, Melville Herskovits, the foremost defender of cultural relativism, found it absurd that anyone would even attempt to decide what is good or bad in a culture. In his words (1951, 22–29): "One does not judge the modes of behavior one is describing, or seek to change them." Rather, "the values every human group assigns to its connections arise out of its own historical background, and can be

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understood only in the light of that background." Herskovits took this to mean that all ways of life must be accorded equal respect and equal validity.

In *Sick Societies: Challenging the Myth of Primitive Harmony* (New York: Free Press, 1992), Robert Edgerton questions both the traditional wisdom of relativism and the dogma used over the past century to validate it. As he writes, "the cumulative impact of relativistic and adaptivist assumptions has led generations of ethnographers to believe that there simply must be a good social or cultural reason why a long-established belief or practice exists" (10). Yet, he asks, how can such cultural traits as cannibalism, slavery, witchcraft, blood sacrifice, wife burning, painful male initiations, female genital mutilation, ceremonial rape, female footbinding, killing of the aged, headhunting, and other acts be right or just (8–15)? Are there no ultimate standards by which to determine what is good and bad? Must all cultural traits be apotheosized and valued? Might not some be culturally neutral, maladaptive, or even pathological? Must we assume that aboriginal beliefs and practices are adaptive forever merely because they continue to exist?

Edgerton's doubts echo the sentiments of some earlier anthropologists who, while sympathetic to practical relativism, increasingly came to reject the moral platitudes of ethical relativism. Robert Redfield (1953, 162–65), for instance, argued against a scholarly "double standard," whereby aboriginal values were respected while the values of Western cultures were continually reviled, despite the commitment of modern societies to "humaneness" as a product of civilization. Alfred Kroeber (1952, 295–96) upheld both "wholehearted, non-weaseling" cultural relativism and absolute ideals of social progress, parting company with Herskovits "on the indiscriminate enshrinement of all values as untouchable, sacrosanct." And George Murdock (1965, 144–50), growing uncomfortable with the relativist point of view, characterized Benedict's idea of fixed moralities as "nonsense" and Herskovits's notion that all cultures should be given equal dignity "not only nonsense but sentimental nonsense." In Murdock's judgment, it was "one thing to respect the organization, integration, complexity, and adaptiveness of cultural systems, but quite another to insist that all are equally admirable or even equally adaptive."

Edgerton's disenchantment with ethical relativism resonates well with previous critiques, although his hyperbolic attempt to support

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his thesis with piles of hellish cultural traits seems to me excessive. Fortunately, this aspect of his work fails to overshadow an otherwise enlightening and stimulating argument against the received pieties of relativism and against even the heuristic usefulness of regarding cultural traits as products of an adaptive process. Has the relativistic creed, as Edgerton contends, led scholars astray in compelling them to sanction any trait, no matter how grotesque, on the grounds that it must somehow promote survival and reproductive success?

Prospects for a "Humanistic Yardstick"

While Edgerton's book is a far-reaching repudiation of relativism, his ultimate objective, as the title *Sick Societies* suggests, is to advance the thesis that not only do some societies lack an adaptive fit with their environment, but some are actually maladaptive—even pathological—and threaten the health and well-being of their members. On this score, Edgerton argues against relativism and for a new set of assumptions that will allow scholars objectively to evaluate the "quality of life" in both traditional and modern societies (24). Edgerton wants to see a truly objective standard of judgment that would determine whether the *performance* of a given culture is adaptive, maladaptive, or pathological in terms of providing for its members a satisfying "quality of life."

To his credit, Edgerton provides some initial guidelines for developing this universal "humanistic yardstick." Wanting to skirt charges of loading the dice towards "particular moralities" (notably those of industrialized societies), Edgerton suggests that we begin by looking into "human nature," or what he calls the "evolved predispositions" of human beings (1992, 65–74). Seemingly, his intent for future research is to compile a "heritage of humanity" that would include both cultural and biological components. Edgerton suggests that a "good" society must not be gauged solely in terms of the survival of its population. Rather, it must also be evaluated in terms of the physical and psychological well-being of all of its members—men, women, and children.

Sick Societies is guaranteed to irritate many contemporary anthropologists, especially given Edgerton's decided antipathy toward complacent "postmodern relativists" who romanticize traditional

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societies and deplore modern societies even while voicing their contempt for cross-cultural comparisons and searches for cultural universals (26–30). Instead, Edgerton is aligned with scholars (many in the past, joined by a growing number in the present) who search for pan-human cultural traits: human nature. Among them, Clyde Kluckhohn (1949, 285) defended the position that universal standards were discoverable. George Murdock (1965, 148–50) also concluded that an empirically based cultural yardstick was possible. For Murdock, the cultural traditions of any society are acquired through social heredity or recent cultural innovations or diffusion. While a particular assemblage might be the best one given the prevailing circumstances, for Murdock it is not necessarily the best one given all cultural alternatives. He suggested that some insights into universal values might be gleaned by researching social change and the choices individuals make while undergoing it. Ralph Linton (1936, 542–43) also upheld the idea of universal principles, arguing that "the values reflected in ethical systems seem to be the same everywhere."

More recently, Elvin Hatch took up the universalist cause in an excellent historical review of cultural relativism. Hatch (1983, 130) particularly opposes contemporary relativists who give tacit support to the status quo while failing to acknowledge "that the exotic cultures to which they grant equal validity are poverty-stricken, powerless and oppressed." Hatch contends that respect for human well-being is not merely a Western idea, but a pan-human one. He, too, calls for the development of a measuring rod of "humanistic principles" to judge the adequacy of human institutions, along with a focus on human nature to see what we might learn about human predispositions.

The creation of an unbiased yardstick with which to evaluate cultural traits is long overdue. What methodological tools might be used in this endeavor? Let me state the question differently: if we could create from scratch the "optimal" human society, how would it be organized? Should we focus more on societal or on individual needs? What archetype social institutions should we set up? In allocating scarce resources such as prestige, power, and wealth, should we institutionalize no inequality, some, or a great deal? Should we institutionalize gender equality? To get some answers, we would most likely turn to history and cross-cultural studies.

Taking this tack, however, raises some perplexing questions. For in-

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stance, given the universal importance of the kinship institution, what residence pattern and conjugal arrangement should we select? In the West, neolocal residence and monogamy are dominant, but from a cross-cultural perspective, patrilocal residence and polygyny (i.e., one male and several females) are practiced or preferred by 70 percent of the world's known societies (Murdock 1967; Divale and Harris 1976; van den Berghe 1990; Ember 1978).[3] Is this because humans are inherently predisposed towards polygyny, or because this marriage type is adaptively suited for particular economic institutions? Even if human inclinations favor polygyny, is this sexual arrangement the most satisfying one for both males and females? Males would probably not object to it, since it seems to be in harmony with male sexual inclinations, but females might, inasmuch as polygyny is (*inter alia*) usually coupled with marked gender inequality.

This underscores another problem: to what degree should our "good" society rest on idealized culture? To what degree should it rest on human biology? Innate tendencies only predispose us toward particular behaviors; they do not determine them. Cultural norms and values can always override such predilections, given our large neocortex, heavy reliance on learning, and long years of socialization. While such propensities persist, they are usually either repressed or channeled into culturally available outlets. For example, we can infer that the strictly monogamous union (i.e., the conjugal pair that mates only with each other for life) is culturally generated, because: (1) the monogamous pair bond is rare among Old World primates (and generally among all mammals); (2) the early hominid (i.e., prehuman) fossil and archaeological record is incompatible with strict monogamy; and (3) the historical and contemporary data on human sexuality are also at wide variance with strict monogamy[4] (see McHenry 1991; van den Berghe 1990; Kemper 1990; Napier and Napier 1985; McKenna 1982; Maryanski 1993; Wright 1994).

Instead, the data suggest that humans are inclined towards the formation of sexual pair bonds—but only for a limited time. Over time, and despite the universal institution of marriage, the human predisposition is for multiple sexual partners, and this tendency is acted upon even without cultural substitutes. But in point of fact, most societies accommodate this proclivity, whether through discreet sexual liaisons, polygyny, or easy divorce, which allows serial monogamy to prevail.

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Finally, if we construct our measuring stick solely on the basis of the cross-cultural record, it will inevitably lead to charges of an "ethnocentrism" stemming from a "smug belief in Western superiority" (Hatch 1983, 144). Moreover, the huge pile of traits assembled from the world's societies has already undergone extensive analysis of one sort or another, and while many cultural regularities loom large, these similarities have already raised many more questions than we have been able to answer.

Primate Adaptation and the Nature of Culture

For the above reasons, if our basis for judgment is drawn solely from a laundry list of preconceived categories, our "good" society project and our pan-human measuring rod are destined to fail. However, Edgerton's recommendation that we focus on human nature holds promise, although most social scientists have either ignored or outright dismissed biology, seeing it as irrelevant for understanding humans or society. Historically, this is understandable given the specter of nineteenth-century Social Darwinism and, in the 1970s, "sociobiology," which portrayed human beings as robots programmed to serve selfish genes (Dawkins 1979). Nor did E. O. Wilson win many friends in social science with his grand proclamation that the new science of sociobiology was about to "reformulate the foundations of the social sciences" (1975, 4). Since then, however, Wilson has modified his stance and sociobiology itself has undergone a variety of transformations. In some circles, the term has been discarded, replaced with such names as behavioral ecology, evolutionary biology, biosociology, and evolutionary psychology. Indeed, human sociobiology, with its co-emphasis on genes and culture, is now a well-respected and reputable science and its findings often explain important features of the world (see, for example, Crippen 1994; Machalek 1992; Nielsen 1994; Carey and Lopreato 1994).

In exploring such macro-topics as the nature of cultural adaptation and the needs of the human animal, a comparative cross-species primate approach might be a promising first step. Here, the significance of data on primate social networks should not be overlooked, so that evolutionary hypotheses about the workings of human societies can be compared with information about the *other*

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187 primate species. Let me illustrate the merits of an evolutionary sociology approach with data from Old World monkey and ape societies to briefly consider some of the defects of cultural relativism.

The Myth of Cultural Adaptation

As Edgerton (188ff.) details in his chapter "Adaptation Reconsidered," aboriginal cultural traits are often seen as "optimally adaptive" because, unlike complex societies, simple societies would appear to face rapid extinction unless their cultural traits functionally fit with environmental conditions. Edgerton, however, maintains that only traits associated with subsistence patterns are consistently functional products of direct selection; other cultural traits are only modestly influenced in this manner. They may reflect responses to earlier, different environmental pressures, or they may be neutral, tied to other traits, or maladaptive—even pathological.

In considering the merits of the adaptive hypothesis, let me first clarify its meaning. In evolutionary biology, to be called an *adaptation*, a trait "must be shown to be a consequence of selection for that trait" (West-Eberhard 1992, 13). One way to show that a trait is indeed the functional outcome of selection is by undertaking correlational research to demonstrate that the same trait characterizes *different* species in the *same* environment, or that the same trait exists for the *same* species (or closely related ones) in *diverse* environments. The assumption here is that a trait was favored by selection in a prior habitat and retained in all descendants. This approach can be applied to cultural traits as well. As Edgerton (191) notes, diverse human cultures coexisting in the same environment often share almost identical economic institutions. For example, the diffusion of the horse into the American West laid the foundation for the successful Plains Indian culture. Thereafter, all of the formerly horticultural tribes that moved into the Plains took up the nomadic hunting and gathering way of life (and other identical attributes) associated with horse-related subsistence activities. But they retained, or only modified, their previous noneconomic customs, despite the strong habitat pressures (Wissler 1914).

If we now consider the adaptive hypothesis using comparative social data on Old World monkeys and apes, almost 50 years of primate field research have shown that, like their human counterparts,

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most primate species live in societies with stable organizational arrangements. Given that Old World higher primates are highly intelligent, mature slowly, live a long time, and undergo a long period of socialization, their year-round association requires not just the integration of adult males and females, but also infants, juveniles, and adolescents. Seemingly, this explains why nonhuman primate societies are complex and flexible, with marked differences within and across species in population, age, sex, ranging and spatial distribution, courtship and mating, social role, social relationship, pubescent sexual dispersal, grooming, play, and feeding patterns, among others (see Jolly 1985; Cheney et al. 1986; McKenna 1982).

Accounting for this large variability has proven difficult. Although scholars have found associations between environmental variables such as habitat, food supply, and predator pressure on the one hand, and organizational traits like group size, population dispersion, and behavioral characteristics on the other, primate societies do not display a functional fit with their environment. While remotely related species living in the same environment often share identical features with regard to subsistence patterns, such as ranging and feeding habits, they are strikingly distinct in other organizational features. Conversely, closely related species living in diverse environments are usually found to have many similar social traits. Environmental pressures never impose the same organizational pattern upon all resident primate species in a given habitat. Instead, other hidden forces operate as constraints on the ability of a primate society to adjust to a particular environment. For example, the dispersal pattern of a species in a given environment is directly influenced by the nature of the food supply and predation pressures, but its inherent preference for particular kinds of social attachments is not easily modified, even when individuals of the species must adjust to varying habitat conditions. This means that not all observed traits are completely related to the current habitat of a species; they may instead result from previous adaptations or may represent an evolutionary compromise between retained ancestral characteristics and the current habitat; others may better be understood strictly from the standpoint of a species' phyletic history; while still others may simply be creative novelties exclusive to a single primate society (Napier and Napier 1985; Wrangham et al. 1994; Smuts et al. 1987; Hinde 1983; Cheney and Seyfarth 1990).

Thus, the primate data are consistent with Edgerton's claims that,

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aside from subsistence-related activity, the adaptive process cannot be applied ad hoc to explain most cultural patterns. Indeed, if the organization of nonhuman primate societies does not show much evidence of functional adaptation, it seems ludicrous to assume that human societies must be adapted to their environment. Thus, we should cast a suspicious eye upon claims of cultural relativism argued solely on the basis of the adaptive hypothesis.

Biology, Language, and Culture

While conventional wisdom has it that humans are the only "true" culture-bearing animals, in part because human behavior evidences great cultural variety, our capacity for culture may be more a matter of degree than kind.

Our African hominoid relatives closely resemble us physically, largely because gorillas (*Gorilla*), chimpanzees (*Pan*), and humans (*Homo*) were the very same animal five to eight million years ago. Our special kinship with chimpanzees is reflected in our similar neurobiology and in human and chimp DNA, which differs by 1.1 percent—a far smaller percentage than that between species *within* a genus of mice, frogs, or flies (King and Wilson 1975; Sibley and Ahlquist 1987). Thus, we should not be surprised that free-ranging chimpanzees share with us, albeit in modified forms, such universal human traits as community organization, cooperative labor, courtship, dancing, greeting rituals, carnivals (gatherings for merry making), incest taboos (strictly observed between mother and son, less so between brother and sister), herbal medicine cures, residence rules, food sharing, tool making, and strategic warfare (armed conflict between adult males of different communities). Moreover, some chimpanzee "cultural traditions" (transmitted social heritages), such as herbal healing techniques, weapon use, and the design features of simple tools, are known to differ dramatically among chimpanzee communities. A case might even be made that the different qualities of chimpanzee traits represent a mosaic of *Pan* "cultural variation" (See Goodall 1986; Wrangham et al. 1994).

While a great deal of effort has gone into demonstrating that language is a human Rubicon, this belief has now been shaken by ape language research, which has unquestionably confirmed that both chimpanzees and gorillas are neurologically equipped to associate

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symbols with objects and use them referentially for communicating through human sign language (see Sevcik and Savage-Rumbaugh 1994; Gardner, Gardner and Canfort 1989). Perhaps more difficult to explain are the recently discovered "linguistic" capacities of young bonobos (*Pan paniscus*), who are fully able to recognize and process English speech sounds. When young bonobos are nurtured in a verbally rich human environment, their auditory systems *automatically* begin to isolate meaningful phonemes, which, upon their maturation, equip these apes with the grammatical rules to understand and respond to human words and sentences at the speech level of a normal two-and-a-half to three-year-old human child (Savage-Rumbaugh et al. 1993; Savage-Rumbaugh et al. 1986).

Why would an ape possess an auditory cortex that can recognize and process, but not produce, a human linguistic code? One answer is that the critical neurological structures necessary for language were laid down in our hominoid ancestors independently of a later selection for speech sounds, which are truly unique to humankind. This suggests that language (or its crucial components) evolved over time from roots in our ancestral hominoid legacy (Maryanski, forthcoming). Despite their rich diversity, all human languages are combinations of phonemes, morphemes, and syntax prompted by a pan-human neurobiology and are descended (albeit with modification) from an ancestral mother tongue.

Perhaps the neurological structures for a hominoid capacity for culture also evolved in a stair-step evolutionary process. Hence, when considering the developmental nature of *human* culture it might be fruitful to restore Edward Tylor's nineteenth-century concept of Culture as a "grand complex whole." While the early twentieth-century shift to the plural *cultures* was useful at the time, it created, in Robert Lowie's words, "invariably artificial units" by focusing on "so many integrated wholes, the single cultures" (1937, 235). To bring back Culture as the natural unit would underscore Lowie's emphasis on "the culture of humanity at all periods and in all places" (Lowie 1937, 236). Under this common umbrella, the richness of each culture can be more fully appreciated as a sectional slice of what is, in fact, the broad range of human cultural variation.

In addition, the notion of a single human Culture could serve as a better conceptual unit for comparative research on primate societies. Indeed, by paying a little attention to our primate heritage we might begin to discover working principles that could move us a

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little farther toward Edgerton's goal of determining the most satisfying patterns of human culture.

Human Nature and Individual Freedom

Edgerton's project may conjure up a picture of a dictatorship dedicated to imposing the conditions of well-being upon all. Such a picture, however, implies a deficient "quality of life" for those dictated to, even though Edgerton's goal is to enhance the quality of life for all by undermining forms of social organization, such as authoritarianism, that detract from it. A society that conformed to human nature could not run roughshod over human predispositions toward freedom.

Consider how different are the social networks of Great Apes (chimpanzees, gorillas, and orangutans) from those of Old World monkeys (Maryanski and Turner 1992; Maryanski 1992). Monkeys (who with prosimians make up 95 percent of all primate species) are predisposed towards high-density cliques with strong matrifocal kinship bonds, marked status hierarchies (especially among ground-dwelling monkey troops), group continuity over intergenerational time, high sociality, and a strong sense of group collectivism. In contrast, our ape relatives (who with humans make up about 5 percent of all primate species) favor low-density networks, weak ties, relatively low sociality, relaxed status hierarchies, few kinship networks, and marked individualism; they need autonomy and free mobility in space. In fact, the orangutan is so self-contained that aside from mothers and their immature offspring, adults live a nearly solitary existence (Tuttle 1986; Rodman and Mitani 1987). While our closest relatives, the chimpanzee and gorilla, are more socially inclined, their social networks are still composed of only a few strong kinship ties, and many weak volunteer ties (Maryanski 1987). This reversal of the monkey-type clique pattern means that in ape societies few constraining strong-tie kinship obligations are placed upon individuals. Thus, individual apes are free to move about and find their own supportive "friendships" which reflect personal likes and dislikes. In chimpanzee society, for example, a weakly tied social structure allows a greater number of individuals to come into contact. Hence, at the micro level, chimpanzees lack stable groups (except for mother and immature offspring), but at

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the macro level they possess an overall "sense of community." Their weak-tie connections facilitate the friendly linking of a large and fluid regional population into a community form of organization (see Goodall 1986; Wrangham et al. 1994).

Now if we speculate that humans to some degree retain a predisposition for hominoid-style individualism, with a penchant for fluid and flexible social structures, what societal types suit this legacy? The answer is hunter-gatherer and post-industrialized societies. Industrial societies are often seen as alien to human nature, in part because scholars are convinced that they lack the necessary social support systems (e.g., extended strong-tie kinship bonds, and institutions to suit other "natural" human needs). Unquestionably, there are major systemic problems with democratic capitalism. But industrial societies do place a high value on individual freedom and sympathy for members of all age and sex classes. Rose Coser, writing *In Defense of Modernity* (1991), maintains that unlike traditional societies, modernity allows for individual achievement by fostering a mindset that encourages intellectual reflection and creativity. While she also recognizes the ills of modern societies, she contends that "these ills cannot be alleviated by advocating collective bliss at the price of personal freedom and individual autonomy" (Coser 1991, 169).

The hominoid data do suggest that the collectivist touchstone often used to characterize the natural state of humans is probably misguided. Instead, human needs for extended intimate bonds may be the result of selection at the sociocultural level rather than at the genetic level. This would help explain the apparent conflicts between collectivism and individualism evident in many institutional spheres as reflections of the clash between cultural constructions and our hominoid legacy. Perhaps it is time to acknowledge that human history is constructed by *Homo*, a hominoid primate driven by both biological and sociological processes.

NOTES

1. Tylor's original definition is as follows: "Culture or civilization taken in its widest ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." While there has been confusion over Tylor's original usage, he clearly intended the concept of Culture to

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have a singular meaning. Stocking (1968) suggests that if only Tylor had defined culture as "the progress of the social whole," there would have been fewer misunderstandings.

2. Boas explicitly called for a doctrine of relativism in the early twentieth century and referred to plural cultures even before 1885 (see Stocking 1968, 202–203).
3. I should qualify this statement by mentioning that although polygyny is overwhelmingly the preferred marriage form, it is usually only the older, higher-status males who have polygynous unions.
4. Among Old World monkeys and apes, only the gibbon ape (*Hylobates*) practices a monogamous arrangement that comes close to the monogamous ideal of mating for life. However, for a monogamous pattern to endure, it seems that gibbons must restrict all their social relationships to the small, isolated nuclear "family" of the bonded pair and immature offspring (see MacKinnon and MacKinnon 1984, 291, and Leighton 1987). The archaeological and fossil records on early hominid populations strongly point to considerable sexual dimorphism (i.e., males were much larger than females), which is linked to a polygynous mating pattern. (In contrast, a monogamous mating pattern is usually linked with codominance in status and in a lack of sexual dimorphism in canine size and body morphology [see McHenry 1991]). Evidence that human habits do not naturally run toward strict monogamy is well documented in the historical and contemporary literature on human sexuality (see Wright 1994; van den Berghe 1990; and Kemper 1990).

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Robert B. Edgerton

BRINGING HUMAN NATURE BACK IN: AUTONOMY OR SOCIALITY?

In The Social Cage, *Alexandra Maryanski and Jonathan H. Turner challenge the widespread assumption that humans are by nature "social animals." They do so by examining the behavior of great apes, who, they conclude, prefer freedom and mobility over close social ties. With the coming of post-industrial society, according to Maryanski and Turner, people may now have a chance to regain the autonomy that evolution has equipped them to enjoy. Despite weaknesses, mostly involving the ethnographic record and the assumption that men and women share the same natural desire for autonomy, the book is a valuable attempt to return a biological perspective to sociological analysis.*

Throughout most of this century, one of the core tenets of social science has been the idea that human behavior is a product of social, cultural, economic, and other nonbiological phenomena instead of "human nature." An equally entrenched belief, even though epistemologically contradictory, is that humans crave sociality, naturally establish close social ties, and choose community over independence. *The Social Cage: Human Nature and the Evolution of Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), by Alexandra Maryanski and Jonathan H. Turner, challenges both of these basic presupposi-

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tions by arguing that evolution has genetically predisposed humans to behave in certain ways—namely, to seek freedom and autonomy, not social solidarity or community. Before examining this provocative thesis more closely, some background will be helpful.

Automony or Sociality?

Early this century, the study of human evolution was primarily conducted in anthropology, while the development of social theory belonged primarily to sociology (with assistance from political science). Because I am an anthropologist and the authors of *The Social Cage* are sociologists, I will confine myself to tracing some of the history of those two fields that bears directly on the challenge that Maryanski and Turner pose. First, at the turn of the century and for many years thereafter, American anthropology was dominated by Franz Boas, who took especial pains to rule biology out of consideration whenever human social systems were at issue. The result was a fervent, almost religious, commitment to separating biological and cultural heredity (Stocking 1968, 264). For Boas, a German Jewish immigrant, racism was abhorrent and therefore the separation of race and culture was imperative. From his prominent position at Columbia University, he trained the leading figures in American anthropology and together they insisted that culture alone determined human behavior. Cultural determinism joined behaviorism in proclaiming the total plasticity of human nature. It followed that there was no need to study biological or human evolution because, as A. L. Kroeber (who was to become Boas's successor as the doyen of anthropology) declared in 1917, culture was "super-organic," completely separate from and totally transcending biology.

Derek Freeman has not tired of reminding us that the crowning moment in the campaign to eliminate biology as a factor in the study of human behavior took place when Boas's student, Margaret Mead, published *Coming of Age in Samoa* in 1928, a book "demonstrating" that so-called adolescent turmoil was entirely a product of culture and had nothing to do with biology. Freeman has convincingly pointed out the inconsistencies and contradictions in Mead's research, which was uncritically accepted by Boas and most other anthropologists. When Ruth Benedict, another student of Boas, fol-

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lowed with *Patterns of Culture*, showing that culture was capable of molding human behavior in strange and wondrous ways, the two books were runaway best-sellers and cultural determinism became a virtually unchallenged truth for decades to come.

E. B. Taylor had some success in promoting the study of cultural evolution in the United Kingdom, but the major British social theorists, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and Bronislaw Malinowski, were almost as blind to human biology as Boas and the American anthropologists who followed him. Today, of course, anthropology includes a large number of biological anthropologists who conduct sophisticated research into the evolved nature of humankind in fields called "evolutionary biology" and "evolutionary psychology," but the majority of anthropologists still focus on sociocultural phenomena. Some of these, like Melford Spiro, have repudiated their earlier embrace of cultural determinism in favor of allowing that both biological and cultural phenomena influence human behavior. But a large number of anthropologists, whether postmodern or not, continue to assert one or another version of cultural determinism.

The most eloquent spokesman for this perspective has been Clifford Geertz, arguably the most influential American anthropologist. For Geertz, there is no human nature independent of culture; indeed, he insists that our emotions and our nervous systems themselves have been so shaped by culture that they cannot be said to function independently of it. Geertz has made this point again and again in a series of intricately woven examples of the subtle ways in which people who are socialized in different cultures—different worlds of meaning—are different people, not merely varieties of "everyman" with foreign accents, strange clothes, and odd customs. Geertz is right about this, but in his denial of an important core of sameness in all people, he untenably clings to the idea of a *tabula rasa* (Geertz 1995).

One of the first declarations of Geertz's view came in a 1965 book entitled *New Views of The Nature of Man* (Platt 1965). In the same volume, ironically, Roger W. Sperry, a renowned Caltech psychobiologist, wrote a powerful attack on the plasticity of human nature, observing that the earlier belief—that the brain was endowed with an "omnipotent plasticity," such that through training or cultural conditioning human nature could be shaped into virtually any desired mold—was no longer scientifically supportable:

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> Much of the basic scientific thinking and evidence behind this view has since suffered a series of severe upsets, leading to a current stand that is almost diametrically opposed to the earlier doctrines. Instead of a loose, universal plasticity in brain hookups, we now see a basic built-in wiring diagram, characteristic of the species and functionally rather rigid. Instead of diffuse, non-selective growth of nerve connections in brain development, we now see a very precise and highly ordered patterning of brain fiber pathways and connections, all strictly preregulated by specific genetic effects and cytochemical affinities. Where there used to be an outright denunciation of the whole concept of "instinct," we now accept the idea that an entire evolutionary tree can be worked out on the basis of inherited behavior patterns, just as it can be worked out on the basis of morphological or serological traits. The conditioned response, along with other forms of learning, continues to be recognized, of course, as a highly powerful modeling influence, especially in man, but only within limits much narrower than previously supposed. (Sperry 1965, 90)

Sperry did not have the last word. Despite three more decades of research in neuroscience, the debate in anthropology over cultural determinism continues (Shweder and LeVine 1984).

Sociological analysis has been, if anything, even more biophobic than anthropology (Bottomore and Nisbet 1978). Durkheim allowed no role for biology, and neither did Mead or Talcott Parsons. In 1965, the same year that Geertz reduced human nature to culture, I had occasion to attend a conference in a fourteenth-century Austrian castle with Parsons. He was quite definite that there was no significant place for biology—or "instincts," as he said—in the "General Theory of Action" that he and Edward Shils had developed. Since then, when sociologists have written about social theory, it has been rare for biology to receive more than cursory attention. For example, Amitai Etzioni's *The Active Society: A Theory of Societal and Political Processes* (1968) addresses alienation theory, which presupposes that a society can fail to meet the needs of its members. Yet Etzioni did not address the nature of these needs until page 623, probably because, as he admitted, no one had yet compiled a list of such needs that commanded more than scattered acceptance. He finally identified affection, recognition, context (meaning), repeated gratification, stability (predictability) in the prevailing pattern of rewards, and variance (variability) in the social

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structure as human needs. His entire discussion of these needs, so fundamental to alienation, spanned all of three pages.

Today a few senior sociologists, such as Pierre van den Berghe and Joseph Lopreato, are sophisticated about biological influences on human behavior, and I am told that some young sociologists have begun to express an interest in the interaction between social and biological variables, but the biological thesis of Maryanski and Turner is quite atypical of their discipline.

In addition to their almost heretical emphasis on human nature, Maryanski and Turner presume to question the widespread conviction that if humans have a nature at all, it is to seek the company and approval of others, to seek common cause in a community of people like themselves. The idea that we prefer a sense of community epitomized by personal intimacy, emotional connections, moral commitment, social cohesion, and continuity over time—what Dennis Wrong (1961) dubbed "the oversocialized conception of man"—is one of the most entrenched in all of social science (Mills 1950; Nisbet 1966).

In contrast to "community," the conventional wisdom holds that urban "society" is characterized by heterogeneity, deviance, and disorder. Despite the recent erosion of some of its underpinnings, this distinction between folk and urban ways of life is very much a part of modern anthropology and of social science in general (Mills 1950). As the Spanish historian Julio Caro Baroja (1963) has pointed out, the folk-urban distinction is ancient—prominent in the works of Aristophanes and Tacitus, not to mention the Old Testament, where it receives particular emphasis, with rural life depicted as not only good and noble, but divine, and city life as the epitome of human evil. The folk-urban comparison achieved contemporary prominence, however, through a series of formulations by nineteenth-century scholars. There were many precursors, of course, including Karl Marx and W. H. Morgan, but the idea was given particularly cogent and explicit form by Ferdinand Tönnies, whose *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887), written when he was only 32, sharply contrasted urban against folk social forms.

Tönnies drew from at least three significant prior works. The English jurist Henry Maine's *Ancient Law* (1861) emphasized the shift from communities based on "status" to those based on "contract." Three years later, Fustel de Coulanges's *The Ancient City* compared the stable, closed communities of earliest Athens and

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Rome with the open, individualized communities that each place later became. And at the center of Otto von Gierke's monumental *Das Deutsche Genossenschaftsrecht* was the vivid contrast between the medieval social structure, with its organic unity of all communal and corporate groups before the law, and the modern nation-state, with its centralization of political power and its liberation of the individual.

Tönnies's formulation was followed by the complementary theories of such important scholars as Georg Simmel, Émile Durkheim, Herbert Spencer, Max Weber, Robert MacIver, Charles Cooley, and Howard Becker. As Robert Nisbet (1966) put it, the fundamental issue for all of these thinkers is the loss of "community." Folk society was said to possess personal intimacy, emotional depth, moral commitment, social cohesion, and continuity in time. In the transition to urban society, it was thought, each of these aspects of community disappeared. The same comparison became important in anthropology in the late 1940s, starting with Robert Redfield's article, "The Folk Society" (1947). Redfield's idea, developed in subsequent articles and books, has had a long and lasting influence (Goodman 1967).

Although there are exceptions to this view, individuality in the sense of seeking freedom of choice and avoiding close social ties is more commonly seen as deviant behavior or social pathology than as the most basic attribute of our evolved nature. In their widely read *Habits of the Heart*, sociologist Robert Bellah and his colleagues have argued that Americans' increasing individualism has so dramatically eclipsed our sense of community that our well-being as a nation is endangered (Bellah et al. 1985). Christopher Lasch described American individualism as "the culture of narcissism" (Lasch 1979).

The Maryanski and Turner Thesis

The authors introduce their book as "an effort to bring biological processes back into sociological analysis without the extremes of early instinct theories or contemporary sociobiology." They propose to offer "not a theory or even a precise description, but some reasonable inferences about humans' innate predispositions as they emerged during the history of primate evolution" (5). They argue,

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as did MacLean in his thesis about the triune brain, that despite the evolution of the cortex after hominids separated from their ape ancestors, humans are still driven in part by their phyletic inheritance. Thus, the behavior of great apes—gibbons, orangutans, gorillas, and chimpanzees—may be relevant to human nature. Maryanski and Turner's examination of the hominid evidence reveals that our "Last Common Ancestor" (LCA)—that creature from which both apes and humans are descended—had weak social ties except for those linking a mother to her offspring, few kinship relationships, little group continuity, and great individuality. Rather than cooperation, reciprocity, and tight-knit groups, they sought self-reliance, spatial mobility, and the ability to move from one group to another.

Accordingly, Maryanski and Turner propose that a human society would be "more likely [to] survive and reproduce" itself if it could create norms, values, traditions, and symbol systems that encouraged "(1) an efficient division of labor between age and sex classes, (2) a stable set of bonds among males, females, and offspring, (3) a strong sense of obligation to relatives and group members, and (4) enduring attachment of both males and females to the young" (73). Indeed, "the very fact that group solidarity [and the four achievements mentioned above] could be achieved through mere cultural processes would mitigate [sic] against selection pressures for it at the genetic level" (67).

Yet when Maryanski and Turner turn to hunting and gathering societies, they do not find strong evidence that culture can so easily achieve these goals. Instead they find that people's individualistic tendencies are prominently displayed. Foraging societies lack a close sense of social solidarity beyond the nuclear family; instead, there are (according to the authors) loose friendships, like those seen among chimpanzees, with little ritual, simple religious beliefs, limited marriage rules, and slight differentiation in authority among adults. There can be social cohesion but if conflict arises, bands are more likely to divide and disperse than cohere. However, Maryanski and Turner conclude that there is little intra-band violence among hunters and gatherers. Instead, life is "relaxed and harmonious" (84).

When people moved from truly hunting and gathering modes of subsistence to horticulture, their needs for equality, freedom, mobility, and individualism were infringed by "social cages" built by the webs of kinship: "the constraints of unilineal descent rules, dictating

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as they did family composition, residence, domestic and economic activity, authority, and marriage, represented a truly dramatic change" (110). Elaborate ritual activities arose to reduce growing social tensions. Agrarian societies imposed still more "cages," this time built on the authority of a few to direct and control the activities of the many. Chiefs and "big-men" (redistributing chiefs) came to control economic tasks, mediate disputes, and coordinate military activities. Religious specialists also gained power. The emergence of social classes and centralized authority restricted freedom, mobility, and choice still more.

Finally, industrialization created obvious abuses, especially when merged with totalitarian governments, but it also allowed options, in the authors' view.

> Thus, contrary to Max Weber's great agonizing over the "iron cage"of rational-legal authority, and critical theorists' general concerns about domination, industrialization produces a far less constraining cage than traditional agrarianism. And post-industrialization perhaps creates even more potentialities for lessening the constraints of power. (138)

Maryanski and Turner conclude that whenever possible, humans attempt to increase their autonomy, freedom, mobility, and choice, because this is their genetic heritage.

This book richly deserves the hackneyed designation of "provocative," but it is in no sense sensationalist. Maryanski is a well-known student of comparative primate behavior; Turner is a much-respected social theorist. They write cautiously, with admirable balance, and they recognize the tentative nature of their speculations. Whether they will succeed in bringing biological processes back into sociological analysis remains to be seen, but they deserve high marks for a thoughtful attempt. I believe that some cautionary points need to be raised, but on balance it is a book that is most welcome.

Hominoid vs. Hominid, Male vs. Female

Any attempt to infer human nature from a living primate model is perilous at best, as legions of primatologists have loudly attested. I am not a primatologist, nor someone who claims expert knowledge

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of chimpanzees (I long ago spent parts of three years studying them in captivity), but based on my glancing personal knowledge and my reading of Jane Goodall, I am not altogether comfortable with Maryanski and Turner's version of chimp behavior, for reasons I will elaborate in a moment.

There is also the problem, as the authors are aware, of the unknowably great gap in evolutionary history between the divergence of hominoids from their last common ancestor (LCA) and the emergence of true hominids, people with the same intellectual gifts (and liabilities) possessed by you and me. The controversy over when truly human cognitive abilities arose—250,000 years ago in Africa, or 40,000 years ago in France?—is very much alive (as the November 17, 1995 issue of *Science* indicates). It is also no longer entirely clear whether all of humanity evolved in Africa, then migrated across the globe; or whether local pockets of hominids, in Asia for example, had partially separate evolutionary histories. All of this aside, although it should not be out of sight altogether, the fact remains that we do not know what happened between the time that "we" branched off from our LCA and our putative next adaptation as hunters and gatherers.

Whatever our hominid ancestors were like (and the fossil record about that changes continually), it is clear that fully human creatures lived, for something like 50,000 to 100,000 years during the Paleolithic, in conditions that would well have resulted in genetic selection for traits that were especially adaptive in that environment—whatever it might have been. It is thought, on the basis of rudimentary archaeological evidence, that we lived then as seminomadic people whose men hunted game (mostly large animals) while women and children gathered roots, vegetables, berries, and other foods, closer to the relative safety of their campsites.

This sexual division of labor poses a problem for Maryanski and Turner's argument, because they do not distinguish between the evolved natures of men and women. There is good reason to believe that the two genders evolved under different evolutionary constraints, each of which may have resulted in different needs for freedom and security. It is axiomatic in biological anthropology that because of women's need for security to raise their children, they were restricted in their food gathering to areas close to the campsite, while men were free to roam far afield in search of large game (Tanner 1981). That women then provided most of the food,

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as they have continued to do in historic time, is beyond dispute, but there is now reason to believe not only that their activities differed from those of men, but that their brains evolved differently in some aspects as well.

In animals from zebra finches to humans, researchers have found that male and female brains are different. For example, using functional magnetic resonance imaging, investigators have found that women use both right and left hemispheres of their brains to solve problems while men activate only the left. This finding has been replicated often enough to encourage speculation that it reflects evolutionary differences. For example, women may have had to use varied language skills to cope with the varied and never-ending demands of their infants. According to anthropologist Helen Fisher (1995), "In order to intuit the meaning of an infant's cries, women found it best to simultaneously integrate as many bits of ancillary data as possible." Men probably had little need for similarly complex skills in order to hunt. That men's and women's brains differ is no longer in dispute, and neither should it be contested that their interests diverge as well. As much as males may desire freedom and mobility, females must first have security for themselves and their young before they can yearn for greater autonomy.

Another question concerns the interpretation of LCA behavior, particularly that of chimpanzees and the arguably more humanoid bonobos or "pygmy" chimps (*Pan paniscus*) whose females are sexually receptive for a longer period than their larger relatives. Chimpanzees are an intriguing model for human evolution because they share 99 percent of their DNA with humans, can be infected with every disease to which humans are vulnerable, and have an impressive capacity to learn, use, and even create symbols (Savage-Rumbaugh and Lewin 1994; Goodall 1990). So there is evidence to support Maryanski and Turner's characterization of chimps. But they omit other characteristic behaviors. As Jane Goodall has written, chimps exhibit territorial behavior, including what she refers to as "war": one band stalks and then attacks another in a clearly premeditated fashion. There is also more cooperation in hunting than Maryanski and Turner note, and stronger ties of friendship between friends and relatives than they appear to recognize. And dominance, a form of hierarchy, is a quintessential chimpanzee trait (Goodall 1990, 23). Admittedly, chimpanzees are complex and contradictory creatures, but a case could be made for them as more sociable, co-

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operative, territorial, and hierarchical beings than Maryanski and Turner describe. So, too, with orangutans, as Birute M. F. Galdikas has described them in her recent book based on years of field research (Galdikas 1995).

A case can also be made that for all its usefulness, ape models of human evolution should be complemented by other means of inferring facets of human nature. There is now a large and impressive array of data in neuropsychology, cognitive psychology, and brain imaging that offers powerful insights into the nature of human information processing, problem solving, perception, risk assessment, attribution of meaning, and many other aspects of the human mind (Barkow, Cosmides, and Tooby 1992; Gilovich 1991; Gazzaniga, 1995). An examination of childhood socialization might also have provided useful insights, even though there is still no cross-cultural compendium of socialization practices that would permit us to say that all societies find it necessary to curb their children's selfishness, greed, anger, envy, stubbornness, and disobedience, or to encourage other traits like sharing, deferral of gratification, and even independence (Konner 1982; Barkow 1989). Finally, a more exhaustive examination of human universals would be likely to conclude that phenomena such as male dominance, feuding over nubile women, greed, lust, revenge, amoral familism, and a tendency to project hostility onto others (paranoid ideation) are aspects of human nature as well (Brown 1991).

While it may well be the case that many hunting and gathering societies are constructed as Maryanski and Turner believe, moreover, there is significant variation among them. The authors acknowledge that the Australian aborigines do not fit their pattern—they had elaborate rituals, immensely complex marriage rules and kinship regulations, considerable hierarchy, elaborate authority gradations, and a highly complex religious system, and they were quite violent. The Tasmanians were similar. In neither of these many societies was freedom a value or, apparently, even a viable individual option. For one thing, strangers were killed on sight.

Conflict was also more common among foraging peoples than Maryanski and Turner acknowledge. The San, once called "the harmless people," had a very high per-capita homicide rate and early in the nineteenth century fought a bloody internecine war. The Aché of Paraguay may have had the world's highest rate of intra-societal homicide. The Mbuti of Zaire, much romanticized by

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Colin Turnbull, had many lovable qualities, but they also squabbled endlessly, stole from one another, and refused to share. There was hierarchy, too, as wealthy men rented their hunting nets to men too poor to own their own. And there was little freedom or equality among the hunting, gathering, and fishing Chumash of Southern California and Kwakiutl of the Northwest Coast. Both had slaves and were often at war to capture more, while chiefs and wealthy families grew richer at the expense of common people. These are but a few examples among many to illustrate that hunters and gatherers are a diverse lot of populations, about whom every generalization about freedom, harmony, and equality can be countered by contrary evidence. Thus, while Maryanski and Turner are probably correct that horticultural and agrarian societies restricted freedom far more than most hunting and gathering societies, other generalizations about non-horticultural, non-agrarian societies are tenuous at best.

What is more, those hunting and gathering societies that survived long enough to be described during the twentieth century may very well not represent the mode of life in which our Paleolithic ancestors evolved at all. To a large extent (here, too, generalizations are difficult), modern band-level foraging societies appear to be relic populations who were driven by more numerous and powerful societies from the richer environments they once occupied. The foraging Siriono of Eastern Bolivia fit Maryanski and Turner's thesis nicely. They have exceptionally weak social ties, are highly mobile, and value the freedom to make their own choices. However, they are likely to have descended from a more complex society that probably practiced horticulture and was socially stratified. Their language still retains words for commoners and slaves, statuses that no longer exist. They are also very unhappy about the lives they lead (Holmberg 1950).

Even if it can be argued that foraging people do provide a useful model of the world in which our ancestors evolved, the one thing that strikes me in the ethnographic literature about hunting and gathering people is how continuously they must work to reduce violence, territoriality, and hierarchy (Shostak 1981). If these are not human predispositions, it is difficult to understand why people who live in small-scale foraging bands spend so much time and energy trying to control them.

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Social Cages and Freedom

There is a certain intuitive appeal to Maryanski and Turner's thesis: that we have evolved to crave freedom, that we have been caged by society for several thousand years, and that, with the emergence of postindustrial opportunity structures, we may once again break free. That this "born-free" version of human nature has a romantic ring to it does not mean that it is wrong, but it must be admitted that the task of operationalizing the concepts of freedom and social constraint is formidable. Short of extremes such as escape or rebellion in the first instance and depression or suicide in the second, it is not immediately obvious how one would assess the nuances of autonomy or social entrapment. The peoples of Highland Papua New Guinea had considerable autonomy in their value systems yet they were entrapped in a cycle of endless warfare that in reality left them few choices but to keep fighting. Pastoralists, whether cattle herders in East Africa, Arabs in the Sahara, or North American Indians on the Great Plains, cherished their freedom to move about as they wished, to associate with people whom they chose, and to marry (and have sexual liaisons) with whomever they liked. Their ethos of freedom of choice was probably the strongest developed by any set of people in the world ethnographic museum. Yet the closer one looks at their actual lives and real choices the more obvious it becomes that they were caged, too—by family demands, lineage pressures, chiefly decisions, religious obligations, and warlike neighbors, to name but a few (Edgerton 1971). One could construct a continuum of social constraint from, for example, incarceration, slavery, or life in a monastery at one extreme, to the freedom of a billionaire bachelor today at the other, but in the actual life circumstances of people in actual social systems, visualizing the dimensions of freedom or autonomy can only be done through a haze of conflicting, exclusive choices, a decision tree that is neither stochastic nor formless, but is instead fraught with consequences that few people can truly anticipate.

The idea of autonomy is deeply rooted in Western psychological and philosophical thought. Allport and Maslow immediately come to mind, and René Dubos wrote that "man is a creature who can choose, eliminate, decide, and thereby create" (Dubos 1966, 64). Thomas Griffith added this encomium: "And so each of us is en-

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gaged in a continuing process of isolating, discovering and asserting his individuality. It may be our destiny to be drawn into the flames, but at least we can beat our wings: individuals are we. We cry out our uniqueness, through being social animals, we do so discretely." (1959, 7–8).

The trouble with sentiments like these is that they are so Western. The quest for individuality is not clearly expressed, if expressed at all, in societies where some collectivity—the family, clan, caste, village, or "people"—is given clear and lasting priority over individuals and individuality. The Hopi come to mind, and so do China, India, Japan, and many kin-based folk societies around the world. The quest for autonomy may well be a part of our evolved nature, as I am inclined to think, but if so it can be contained and even eliminated by sociocultural constraints. While such a large portion of the world's population continues to give their allegiance and their lives to groups (gangs, cults, religious movements, ethnic groups, nation states) the task of determining which is the more natural—autonomy or commitment to a group—is a daunting one.

Integrating Sociology and Biology

It should be self-evident that human behavior can be analyzed at various levels: the physical environment, the human environment, economy, culture, social interaction, political institutions, cognition, personality, neurophysiology, molecular genetics, and many others. Alas, one discipline after another has chosen a certain, usually narrow, level of analysis and claimed it as its own, defending it with a kind of intellectual irredentism that sometimes makes the Balkans seem tranquil in comparison. Despite this wrangling and intense competition (not excluding lobbying for government research dollars), so much has been learned during the "Decade of the Brain" (as the former Director of the National Institute of Mental Health, Lewis Judd, called the 1990s) that much of what went before seems positively primitive (Bodmer and McKee 1995; Gould and Gould 1994). Where and even how neurotransmitters in the brain work on specific dopamine receptors can now be determined with remarkable precision. Not only is the genetic basis of pathological conditions like alcohol abuse and some mental illnesses becoming clear, it

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has been shown that personality, temperament, animal behavior, and many other more ordinary phenomena have a strong genetic component. It is true that only about 1200 of the roughly 100,000 genes in the human genome have been cloned, but many more are being cloned all the time; and in its ability to understand and change important aspects of human behavior, neuroscience has left the social sciences far behind. The social sciences have intervention programs that can change some behaviors, and we have many ideas about how to assist change in the developing world and elsewhere, but the neurosciences have gene therapy and psychopharmacology.

Still, for all of its achievements, neuroscience has a flaw when it comes to understanding complex human behavior. As Alan G. Kraut and Sarah Brookhart (1995, 217) have observed,

> Modern biology, for all its impressive findings, is deeply mired in an era of reductionism. Its overarching question is: What is the smallest unit that relates to the phenomenon? Usually, it takes the form of: Where is the gene? or, What is the neurotransmitter? or, Which part of the cell is responsible for what?
>
> Ultimately, what needs to be explained is not these small parts, but the broader phenomena. What we want to know is how that gene manifests itself in obesity, or how that neurotransmitter affects emotion, or how that cell supports the organism's life. We want to know about the disease, the trait, and the human behaviors that result from all of the small pieces.

What the social and behavioral sciences offer neurosciences is the holistic perspective it lacks. They permit people to be seen in the full context of the world of meaning in which they live. If there is to be an integration of biology and sociology, as Maryanski and Turner hope, sociology and the other social sciences will continue to have much to offer the biologists. As we move toward this hoped-for integration we would do well to keep in mind what Ambrose Bierce once said: "For every complex problem, there is a simple solution, and it's wrong." Where human nature is concerned, it is likely to be the case, as Christopher Boehm has noted, that our genetic inheritance will prove to possess many ambivalent and contradictory attributes (Boehm 1989). And we should not forget that whatever our biological predispositions may ultimately prove to be, culture will continue to have the power to modify and contain them, though not eliminate them altogether. Culture is not super-

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organic, but it is powerful enough that it cannot be discounted. Our task is still that of sorting out the interaction between "nature" and "nurture" as both impinge on complex human behaviors, and Maryanski and Turner's book will help to move us along that long, rocky road.

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Robert J. Holton

RATIONAL CHOICE THEORY IN SOCIOLOGY

James Coleman attempted to reconcile rational choice theory with the classical sociological concerns: the relationship between the individual and society, and the historical and normative status of rationality. He identifies limits to the rational choice model, and suggests some promising but ultimately unconvincing ways around them. His project does, however, offer an important critique of Weber's theory of bureaucracy, which is of value in analyzing relationships between corporate actors and particular persons.

Until very recently, rational choice theory has been far less central to sociology than to economics. Whereas rationality is a fundamental presupposition of mainstream economics, for sociology it has always been problematic. This is partly because irrational or nonrational determinants of social action have been viewed as important, and partly because rationality has been denied a unitary status.[1] In other words, there is not one structure of rationality, but multiple incommensurable rationalities that vary according to the viewpoints, interests, and power of the actors concerned. What is rational to one may be irrational and arbitrary to another.

There is also a normative issue. While economics generally ar-

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gues that the real-world actor should do what the rational actor would, in order to maximize her interests, sociology lacks such a clear-cut normative presumption. Sociologists often emphasize resistance to rationality, and focus on alternatives to individual self-interest. Utopianism remains a legitimate interest for sociologists, whereas economists tend to shun it.

The late James Coleman's *Foundations of Social Theory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), published the year after the launching of the journal *Rationality and Society*, promises to transform this situation. His objective, and that of his collaborators in the journal, such as Michael Hechter and Peter Abell, is not to colonize sociology with an economistic version of rational choice theory. Rather, it is to recast the central concerns of sociology within a framework that brings together the theories of social exchange and rational choice. For Coleman, all types of human action, including norms and much collective behavior that is regarded as irrational or expressive, may plausibly be brought within theories of purposive rationality.

There is immense ambition behind Coleman's project. In the first place, he addresses some of the knottiest issues in social theory. These include what Coleman sees as sociology's microfoundational schism between those who view "modern man" as a robot, and those who see "him" as an irrational participant in collective behavior. Beyond this there is the even greater problem of how to relate micro- and macro- levels of social organization.

The second part of Coleman's ambition is to bridge the gap between social theory, moral philosophy, and social research, so as to enhance the capacity of social science to assist in the resolution of major social problems through institutional design. These include the crisis of the family and the excessive power of corporate actors. As Adrian Favel (1993) has pointed out, Coleman's intention is to be both explanatory and prescriptive, advancing a dialogue between social theory and moral philosophy designed to address questions about rights raised by moral philosophers such as Rawls and Nozick, but in a manner that avoids transcendent metaphysical speculation in favor of a sociology of rational choice.

Fin-de-siècle skepticism towards the claims of rational choice theory to explain and benefit the world may not seem out of place after two world wars, the Gulag, Auschwitz, Pol Pot, and Balkan ethnic cleansing. These tragedies may be read either as proof of the

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continuing power of irrationalism, or as manifestations of the irrational consequences of the rational pursuit of terror. Coleman, by contrast, limits the normative aspect of his discussion to the functioning of Western liberal democracy in general and the United States in particular. The wider global context is noted but not systematically pursued. It is not immediately apparent how the book's argument might be applied to social actors facing famine, genocide, or civil war.

Indeed, Coleman starts with the optimistic view that we live in the epoch of purposive social organization, constructed through human intention, and therefore capable of being evaluated and reshaped. There is, he claims, a fundamental difference between "natural," primordial ties of family, clan, village, and so forth, on the one hand, and, on the other, a constructed environment embodied in corporate organization, both public and private. The decline of primordialism brings major problems, such as the depletion of the personalized social capital necessary for the socialization of children and for emotional bonding among adults. Yet it also brings opportunities to redesign the allocation of rights and the structure of authority so as to improve corporate organization. Coleman sees his book as "providing the foundation for constructing a viable social structure, as the primordial structure on which persons have depended, vanishes" (652). This objective is of course applicable to any particular society, as well as to the transnational institutions of global society.

Coleman's shift from primordialism to social construction is neither unfamiliar nor unproblematic. It is the shift from Tönnies's (1955) *Gemeinschaft* (community) to *Gesellschaft* (association), and it has close affinities with Durkheim's (1947) discussion of mechanical and organic solidarity. The problems with Coleman's use of this dichotomy are also familiar. Two particular matters are worthy of mention.

First, there are always difficulties in the application of a binary conceptual distinction to complex processes of historical change. Constructed political and legal organizations have coexisted alongside spontaneous institutions, such as language and money, for centuries. Coleman notes certain precursors of modern constructed social organization, such as the legal personality of the corporation in late medieval law. Yet he admits that "the full history of the re-

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structuring of social organization from the thirteenth century to the present has yet to be written" (536).

The lack of a convincing historical sociology in Coleman's theory of organizations is also reflected in his comments on the family. Coleman's foreshortened sense of historical development allows him to present the contemporary transformation of the family as a sudden and dramatic crisis, rather than one phase in a process of longer-term change. The family itself is a rather more complex historical institution than Coleman suggests, with a longer history of instrumental, calculative, individualistic, and at times amoral social action than his rather romantic picture of primordial normativity implies.[2] As with all nostalgic arguments about "the world we have lost," this one also needs to be treated with caution.

A second, related difficulty is the applicability of rational choice theory to premodern societies. It remains unclear whether Coleman intends his rational choice apparatus to apply to what he sees as the long epoch of primordialism. Others have been less reticent. A strong body of opinion suggests that the logic of rational choice applies to a range of actors from medieval farmers to imperial dynasts.[3] But is rational choice compatible with primordialism? Put another way, can people who do not think in terms of the pursuit of instrumental rationality still pursue it? If so, then Coleman's distinction between primordial and constructed social organization is misleading.

Coleman's argument is that how people understand the social environment around them matters, and has changed. Like Anthony Giddens (1990), he wants to draw attention to the reflexivity of contemporary social action. Modern life is constantly subject to monitoring and evaluation through processes of information feedback and analysis, which leads, in turn, to the continual reshaping of individual and institutional activities. It is this active social orientation, rather than the underlying logic of rationality, which distinguishes the modern world from what went before.

For Coleman, modern social reflexivity offers two intellectual opportunities for sociology. First, it may be able to do better than economics where social theorizing is underdeveloped. Second, it can remedy what he sees as the excessively abstract style of reasoning about normative issues found in moral philosophy. Rather than speculate about the optimal character of norms evaluated against transcendent standards of judgment, he prefers a realistic analysis of

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norms as they have developed in relations between real actors in society.

Like modern society, sociology is reflexive, in that the subject matter of the discipline encompasses itself. A sociological approach to social action and rationality must therefore analyze, *inter alia*, the action of engaging in the construction of social theory. According to Coleman, this radical reflexivity is often missing in classical sociology (and, one might add, mainstream economics). To the extent that this is true, Coleman's version of rational choice theory must not only pass the test of explaining social action, but also of analyzing the action of theorizing, and, in particular, the role of social-theoretical knowledge in helping to construct social reality.

Coleman's Social Theory

In addressing the relationship between individuals and social systems or structures, Coleman attempts to thread his way between what he sees as two major traps in social theory. The first is what might be called radical methodological individualism, which attempts to explain social action as nothing more than the aggregate of individual actions. Coleman rejects this approach because individual actions are interdependent; they generate emergent system-level phenomena that are often unintended and unexpected. Yet Coleman also wants to avoid a second trap, that of structuralism, which forecloses on human agency, and, in the process, human freedom. Society is neither the sum of individual choices by actors, nor a supra-organic totality within which individuals are wholly subsumed.

Coleman identifies his own position as a variant of methodological individualism, partly for the pragmatic reason that starting with the individual is the most useful way of connecting human intervention with the purposive construction of social organization. But it is also partly the result of a more substantive intellectual wish to ground the emergence of norms in individual interaction, rather than assuming their presence as an axiom or as an unexplained *deus ex machina*. This strategy brings Coleman very close to rational choice theory, yet he expressly distances himself from the view that norms can be reduced to practices generated by self-serving individuals engaged in repeated exchanges.

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Coleman's starting point is certainly the actor, with reason and interests, yet without the resources to realize those interests. This bundle of characteristics requires social exchange with others, which in turn involves both behavioral interdependence and the development of structures of rights. Residual deviations from rationality are possible, as in the case of what Jon Elster (1979) calls precommitment. However, Coleman's initial presumption is that much that has hitherto been regarded as irrational can be recast as rational once the viewpoint of the actors concerned has been discovered.

So far this follows the familiar strategy of rational choice theory. The first bridge between all of this and Coleman's specifically sociological perspective is made through the identification of eleven different structures of social action. While Talcott Parsons (1968) thought in terms of a singular generic structure of action, Coleman offers a far more complex and nuanced discussion. This takes into account the ways in which actions vary according to whether or not they involve transfers of control, or rights of control, over resources; how such transfers, where they exist, differ from one another; and whether such actions produce externalities (third-party effects).

Like economists, Coleman rejects the possibility of any objective interpersonal measure of utility. But he sees individual preferences and standards of utility as generated instead by the kinds of comparisons that grow up within social systems based on unequal distributions of power. Thus utility maximization "cannot be normatively justified, except within the set of values implied by the initial distribution of control among the actors in the system" (42).

Moreover, exchange does not necessarily generate social equilibrium between free-standing actors. Rather, concentrations of power, especially corporate power, are possible. Social exchange takes place not simply in isolated two-person exchanges, or between several individuals within markets, but increasingly within wider social and political systems. The macro-level characteristics of these systems require analysis over and beyond that offered by rational choice theorists.

Put more explicitly, whereas rational choice theory provides a micro-level theory of macro-level institutions, Coleman's sociology offers a theory of micro-macro-micro transitions. Here, micro-level interactions generate unintended macro-level structures, and these structures in turn influence micro-level interactions.

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A second bridge between Coleman's theory and conventional sociology is his presumption that the rights that link social actors together are an emergent property of social life, rather than natural presocial endowments. Coleman is impatient with speculative philosophical accounts of the individual as a rights-holder outside society, and with strategies of fictional abstraction such as Rawls's "veil of ignorance." Thus, "individuals have no rights until there is a consensus in the particular social situation involving a rights claim" (596). The task of the theorist is then to locate the rationality of emergent systems of rights, and to use this as a basis for prescribing more optimal allocations of rights in society.

Thus, although Coleman is close to rational choice theory, he subtly tries to distance himself from its typical utilitarian and liberal-individualist formulations. This distancing process, however, is by no means successful.

What Coleman appears to share with the utilitarians is a preference for a unitary conception of social action based on the most parsimonious of premises about self-interest. He assumes that social action cannot be grounded both in the rational pursuit of interests and in norms: one or the other must take precedence. Coleman resists the sociologists' privileging of normativity for two reasons. First, such a starting point precludes the construction of theories about how normative systems develop. Second, this approach would commit him to an oversocialized conception of humankind.

This is unsatisfactory in several respects. First, why should the assumption that action is structured by norms preclude theories about how they are constructed, any more than the presumption of rational interests precludes theories about *their* emergence? Max Weber[4] posited rationality as an ideal type of social action, but this did not preclude either the analysis of deviations from rationality, or the historical analysis of the emergence of rationality. The same methodology is possible with the analysis of norms.

Second, is it necessary, as Coleman believes, that reasoning from normative axioms must lead inexorably to oversocialized conceptions of human agency? One alternative possibility is that normativity can be linked with more purposive conceptions of human agency through emergent universals such as the search for freedom and human dignity. Socialization, in this alternative sense, does not turn individuals into the puppets of strong normative controls. It is rather that agents are socialized to be individuals.

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Third, is it really the case that normativity arises only as a result of the rational pursuit of interests? Could it not equally be the other way around, such that rationality is grounded in norms, and that the means-oriented purposive rationality Coleman takes as axiomatic is historically emergent rather than an invariant property of human action?

Underlying these concerns, as Amartya Sen (1977) has pointed out, is an unresolved epistemological issue about the status of the rational pursuit of interest. Is this necessarily axiomatic of *all* social behavior? If so, it tells us nothing about variations in the substantive reasons behind people's actions, and hence says little about the normative or expressive components of such action. In a given situation, we could say it was equally rational to be controlled, passionate, prudent, emotional, or whatever, where all that is being identified is the imputed reason that seems to best fit the action in question. The rational pursuit of interest thereby becomes the lowest common denominator in the logic of social action, impossible to falsify, and yielding bland and uninteresting results.

On the other hand, there are points where Coleman seems to suggest that rational choice theory is falsifiable: for example, where it claims to eliminate such alternatives as irrational and expressive actions. Insofar as rational choice is testable, then the alternatives must be, too. With few exceptions, however, Coleman is reluctant to allow this, foreclosing on any further analysis once explanations that fit the rational choice model are found. The starting point of the rational pursuit of interest is thus not only theoretically arbitrary, but epistemologically dubious.

It is also sociologically implausible. This is primarily because sociality requires the simultaneous presence of micro and macro levels of social organization. The micro-level pursuit of interests by rational actors must always take place under initial conditions which include human language, patterns of meaning, and norms of socialization that make communication and social interaction possible.

This means that micro and macro are omnipresent from the start, giving the relationship between structure and agency a recursive quality, as Giddens (1979) puts it. Coleman regards the speculative philosophical treatment of questions such as optimal rights as excessively abstract and divorced from social life, but it seems the same criticism might well be made against interest-based rational choice theory itself.

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To his credit, Coleman faces up to some of these difficulties midway through the book. Rational choice theory, he argues, has its limits. Although he bypasses the issue of the social constitution of rationality, Coleman is more forthright about the problem of the origin of interests. Asking how individuals come to have the interests they do is not ordinarily seen as possible within utilitarian versions of rational choice theory (292–93). This is because the theory assumes purpose, leaving analysis to concentrate on the issues that arise in its realization.

The problem of the origins of interests remains a serious residual difficulty for rational choice theory. In Coleman's view the theory not only fails to explain how interests arise, but also cannot explain how and why interests change. This residual is a large one. However, Coleman also points to major difficulties with those theories that presume social norms from which individual interests are then derived. In this case the residual problem lies in accounting for human agency and individual choice without recourse to deterministic reasoning. Consequently, "a theory based on rational action has the same deficiency at the level of the individual, as a theory which begins with societal purposes has at the level of the social system" (292–93).

Coleman goes on to argue that the problems associated with the normative starting-point are more intractable and intellectually disabling, but for reasons that appear more to do with pragmatism and normative preferences than anything else. His next intellectual move is not therefore to develop a multidimensional social theory grounded in both interests and norms. This option was attempted by earlier writers such as Parsons,[5] and has been further explicated in Jeffrey Alexander's four-volume commentary (1982–84) on classical sociological theory. Coleman, by contrast, looks elsewhere.

Essentially he returns to rational choice theory and seeks to buttress it with additional support. He draws upon two specific resources. The first is Mark Granovetter's (1985) discussion of the embeddedness of rational economic action in networks of personal relations. These personal relations generate the trust and stable expectations necessary for the enforcement of norms. Discussion of these mechanisms is seen as lacking in economic thought and thus as undeveloped in rational choice theory. To dramatize the importance of personal relations Coleman introduces the concept of so-

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cial capital. This can only accumulate "when the relations among persons change in ways that facilitate action" (304).

Correcting Rational Choice Theory

It is fair to say that rational choice theory is stronger in dealing with rights than with obligations. Thus, the discussion of social capital may be seen as Coleman's best attempt to come to grips with the latter. His thesis is that involvement in the development of social capital, within a framework of norms, is necessary for effective socialization. The corollary is that socialization breaks down if the personalized networks of social capital are somehow depleted or eroded, or if norms never emerge in the first place. Coleman cites a number of examples from contemporary family life where he believes such networks are being eroded. Underlying all this is the assumption that social capital does not flow inexorably from rationality and self-interest. The processes through which social capital is generated or depreciated arise elsewhere, in areas such as social closure by groups, stability of the social structure, and ideology (318–21).

The second resource upon which Coleman draws to rectify deficiencies in rational choice theory is a theory of the self. Changes in rational choice theory are called for, not only with respect to its disregard of socialization, but also in relation to its minimalist view of the human actor. Assumptions of utility maximization are too narrow. They cannot explain how social selves come into being. Nor do they address whether the self is a stable, consistent, and unitary structure, or whether it is in some sense subdivided into distinct elements, subject to inconsistency and change.

Coleman argues that we can do better than rational choice theory by developing a sociology of the self. Following earlier sociologists, such as G. H. Mead (1962), he argues that the self is composed of different elements. One way of conceptualizing this is in terms of the distinction between the object self, "me," and the subject or acting self, "I." Whereas the former experiences social life in terms of levels of satisfaction, the latter acts through the mobilization of resources so as to realize interests. This conception of interests links the object and acting self, but there may be discrepancies between the two. This, according to Coleman, is because the object self is

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ever changing and expanding its scope, raising the possibility of lags between experience and action.

These lags may be further magnified through the increasing complexity of interaction with the social world. Rather than simple interactions between actors in pursuit of tangible divisible goods, Coleman adds greater complexity by including a range of further mechanisms of social action. These include seeking an increase in personal satisfaction through identification with others, sharing with others one's experience of the same events, depending on others, and vesting control over one's actions in others. All of these interactions involve internalizing the interests of others.

However, it is not immediately apparent to Coleman whether there is an overarching sense in which all these mechanisms may be brought together as manifestations of rationality. What is rational about transferring control over one's actions to significant others? In answering this, he is not satisfied by the utilitarian truism that this will occur when the expected benefits exceed the costs. Nor does he believe that individuals have the capacity to discern when such outcomes would eventuate. Instead, Coleman responds to the problem of the complexity of the self by invoking the idea that each person has a different constitution in which are balanced a set of "rights" applying both to oneself and to a range of external actors. Thus "each of the actors from the outside world who participates in a person's internal system of action is endowed with certain rights by that person" (526). Moreover, the external influences that may become internalized are not only particular persons with interests, but also norms, passions, and moral principles.

Where do external influences leave rationality? Does it become merely one influence amongst many upon the self and social action? Or does it occupy a different order of importance than norms, passions, or interests? Coleman adheres to the second of these options, but his elaboration of this point is disappointingly brief. He sees rationality as generated by "a kind of evolutionary feedback process" (526), in which actors learn the consequences of actions taken within the current framework of the their internal constitution. Rationality is, in this sense, preconstitutional, whereas norms and passions are not.

Here Coleman moves onto a very narrow theoretical ledge, with accounts of rationality as presocial on one side, and, on the other, accounts of rationality as a social product on a par with other social

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products such as norms and moral principles. It is unfortunate that the contours of this ledge are not developed in more depth, for example by a confrontation with Jürgen Habermas's (1984) theory of communicative action.

The challenge to Coleman, implicit in Habermas's work, is that it is possible to conceive of the logic of social action in a nondeterministic way without privileging purposive rationality in the way that Coleman feels obliged to do. For Habermas (1979), purposive rationality is one of two major structures of social action: the other is moral learning, institutionalized in normative frameworks. Thus, the rational choice of means cannot be treated as ontologically prior to the interpersonal formation of values and norms. Both Habermas and Parsons share a sense of society as an action system in which a strong dialectic takes place between structure and agency around the purposive and normative contingencies of social life. In failing to scrutinize this position, Coleman boxes himself into a binary choice between two options, both of which are seen as deficient. In this sense his engagement with the microfoundations of social life is ultimately unsatisfying.

Coleman on Bureaucracy

If Coleman's study has its limits, it also exhibits some magnificent achievements. The foremost of these is a sophisticated elaboration and extension of the research program of rational choice theory as it applies to corporate actors, both public and private. For Coleman, the corporate actor is not simply an aggregation of individual actors, but rather a system of action embracing one or more principals and one or more agents. Typically, the corporate actor has multiple principals and multiple agents. To act purposefully, however, it must solve two problems. The first is the coordination of the resources and interests of the multiple principals into a coherent set. The second is the deployment of resources and multiple agents so as to realize interests. In addressing these problems, Coleman develops a very interesting critique of Max Weber's classic discussion of rationality in society, with particular reference to bureaucracy.

For Coleman, authority relations constitute major varieties of social action, and may be further subdivided into conjoint and disjoint types of relationships. Each involves individuals giving up cer-

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tain rights of control over their actions to others. Conjoint authority relationships are those in which rights of control are given up unilaterally with no compensatory benefit, as when people accept the charismatic authority of leaders. Disjoint authority relations are those in which people surrender rights of control in return for a benefit, as in the employment of salaried subordinates within a bureaucracy. It is in the sphere of disjoint authority relations, as manifest in bureaucracy, that Coleman identifies a major problem in Weber's work.

Coleman criticizes Weber for conflating two distinct elements in the bureaucratic complex: the concept of bureaucracy as an impersonal hierarchy of positions, and the notion of bureaucracy as an instrumentally rational authority (that is, the most efficient means to reach a given end). For Coleman, the two are not necessarily connected. Functional efficiency is not necessarily realized through the adoption of an impersonal bureaucratic structure. Weber's conflation effectively forecloses on the question, "What kinds of organizational structure will most effectively realize the purpose for which the organization is designed?" In this manner an opportunity is lost to apply sociology to questions of institutional design. Instead, Weber treats bureaucracy as both efficient and impersonal, and hence necessarily and fatefully dehumanizing. We are left with the fatalistic metaphor of purposive rationality as an Iron Cage (Weber 1978, 181), in which ends have been subordinated to means, and the search for means has become an end in itself.

Coleman follows this criticism of Weber with a powerful *coup de grâce*, arguing that bureaucracy does not necessarily realize functional efficiency due to the mediating influence of its personnel. This influence may be exercised to meet the formal goals of the organization, or it may not. This raises a major question for disjoint authority relations, namely, Why should the subordinate work to maximize the superordinate's interests?

In a general and mostly persuasive review of corporate practice, Coleman notes significant deviations from the Weberian model of impersonal authority in a bureaucracy to address this problem of noncompliance. These include the use of incentive payments to senior managers, and the specific vesting of control over corporate resources in a particular person's hands. Such trends persuade him that corporations now intertwine the interests of the corporation and those of its members so fully that it has become very difficult

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to separate them. In a provocative argument that challenges both Weber and more recent theorists like Oliver Williamson (1975; 1985), Coleman claims that the modern corporation should not be seen as an impersonal machine, but as a system more like an unconstrained market. Its organizational structure "lies not in defining expectations and obligations, but in structuring reward systems and providing resources" (436). This is interesting because it denies much of Williamson's argument that markets and hierarchies offer contrasting ways of conducting transactions. What Coleman is saying is that corporations have become more like markets in terms of their flexible capacity to link self-interested persons with resources via the distribution of rewards. Of course, Coleman's organizations are not spot markets, but neither are they stable, normatively-bound hierarchies.

The challenge for the internal governance of corporations is therefore how to take into account the interests of agents in the organization of increasingly diffuse and decreasingly hierarchical authority systems. For Coleman, this means that ways must be found to make the pursuit of agents' interests consistent with the realization of corporate interests. This, however, requires more thought about which allocation of rights within a corporation is optimal for corporate interests to be realized. Issues such as this simply do not arise within a Weberian framework.

Coleman's critique of Weber is a powerful one that has implications for both social theory and institutional design. It helps open up organizations to richer empirical analysis of the internal play and rationality of corporate agents, and in the process offers insights into the range of options that exist for organizational norms and governance structures.

Beyond these internal questions for the corporation, Coleman also deals with the problematic and uncertain relationship between corporate actors and the wider society. While he rejects Weber's vision of modern society as an Iron Cage dominated by bureaucracy and instrumental rationality, Coleman emphasizes that corporate actors have massively expanded their power and influence at the expense of direct relations between particular persons. As a result, most of the events in which individuals are interested are no longer under their direct control. The potential danger of this situation is that it creates a dependent population that receives benefits from intangible corporate actions over which they exercise only very

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distant and indirect means of control. For Coleman, the Iron Cage may not be here yet, but it is not far away either.

How then is the public accountability of corporations to be achieved? Can the model of individual responsibility be applied to corporations?

Coleman explores this possibility by returning to the process of socialization. If individual responsibility is achieved largely through interpersonal socialization, what institutions might socialize the corporation? This question is made more difficult by the depletion of historical family-based and philanthropic sources of socialization. In addition, the detachment of corporate responsibility from individual persons means that forms of socialization applied to natural persons may no longer be an effective means of securing corporate responsibility.

The starting point for any resolution of this issue remains with the interests of those affected by corporate action: customers, employees, neighbors, owners, and investors. In many cases such groups are unorganized. While they may possess the individual power of "exit" from market transactions with a given corporation, they generally lack any power of active "voice" in corporate decision-making.

Coleman goes on to investigate two strategies whereby such interests may socialize the corporation. The first is through the representation of external interests within the governance structures of the corporation, e.g., through external directorships. This strategy has limitations, however, notably a failure to address negative externalities that may be imposed by the corporation. Coleman argues that these are optimally addressed neither by moralizing the corporation, nor necessarily by vesting rights of control over externalities in society as a whole via government agencies. For cases in which persons affected by the externalities are identifiable, he advocates government assistance to eliminate the costs of collective action for such persons, thereby enhancing their capacity to exercise effective voice. Meanwhile, corporations themselves can be induced to act responsibly by such rational means as greater external auditing and appropriate tax incentives, each designed to be responsive to particular interests.

The attractiveness of this proposal, from a liberal democratic viewpoint, is that it retains an emphasis on individual agency and the individual's claim to best know his or her own interests, while

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adapting these presuppositions to the level of corporate power. This reclaims agency from the fatalistic stasis induced by Weber's Iron Cage scenario, while attempting a fine-grained approach to the reallocation of rights to particular persons in their dealings with corporate bodies.

The Hazy Promise of Coleman's Sociology

It would be unfair to leave the discussion on a Panglossian note. We live in a world that is very far from the best one possible, and Coleman is aware of this. He diagnoses very serious challenges to the capacity of modern society to reproduce itself. These arise from the decline of the family's role in interpersonal socialization, and the failure of increasingly powerful corporate actors to fill the gap. Persons have replaced households as the units engaging in economic activity, while the welfare activities of the family have been taken over by the state. Taxation-fed redistribution, however, fails to address either the micro-level process of personal socialization, or macro-level free rider problems. Thus "the social structure necessary to suppress the disincentive to contribute is missing" (657). Families were better able to handle free-rider problems through social-psychological mechanisms such as stigma and reputation, but no longer. Where are the new social institutions to replace them?

Perhaps this is just a conservative lament. Does it not sentimentalize the past with views of childhood that are simplistic and historically naive? Does it not gloss over negative features of the long history of the family, such as sexual abuse and patriarchal domination? Coleman's sociology of social action is not in any sense gendered. Women's increasing involvement in the workforce is discussed solely in terms of negative effects on children, and parent-child relations. Similarly the growing autonomy of adolescents from parents is seen as tending to pathology rather than empowerment. In one sense, then, we return full circle to the lack of a convincing historical and theoretical anchorage for Coleman's account of the personalized world we have lost. As a result, Coleman lacks any effective means of explaining the struggle by women and children to obtain rights.

Yet there is far more to it than this. Coleman is on stronger ground in identifying the limits of corporate (i.e. impersonal) insti-

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tutions as comprehensive models of social organization. In thematizing such issues as responsibility for the socialization of particular persons, Coleman is able to specify problematic features of "the new social structure." The most central of these are taken to hinge on conflict between the family and the corporation (in its widest, impersonal sense, e.g., the state) over responsibility for child rearing. This becomes the core question for the society concerned with its capacity to reproduce itself via the creation of a new generation of socialized individuals.

In terms of public policy, this creates dilemmas. "Should social policy attempt to recreate the conditions which reinforce parents' natural [sic] interest in and responsibility for their own children, or attempt to create conditions which will induce agents of the state to take a long-term personal interest in and responsibility for children who fall into their hands" (608)? The first option would appear to fly in the face of social trends toward individual adult autonomy, while the second, according to Coleman, relies on the dubious capacity of state agents to substitute for parents.

The corner that Coleman boxes himself into here might be less restrictive were he able to conceive of the socialization process itself as a dynamic, historically changing institution. This conceptual shift does not appear possible. Instead, his evaluative standpoint remains steadfastly that of the *Gemeinschaft*.

For all these problems, though, this is an ambitious, highly intelligent, intellectually honest, and morally uplifting book. If it is true that radical conservatives make the best sociologists, then Coleman certainly fits the bill.

NOTES

1. A subtle review of the problems of assuming a unitary or holistic rationality, and of the presence of multiple rationalities or ways of deliberative thinking is contained in Hindess 1988, especially chapter 5.
2. Many contributions to the history of the family and of childhood have challenged the assumptions that (a) the premodern family may be regarded as a high point of interpersonal care and responsibility, and (b) modernity is rapidly destroying this family- and child-centeredness. As far as (a) is concerned, it has been argued, from French evidence, that the idea of childhood and the sentimentalization of family life are modern, i.e., seventeenth-century inventions rather than age old "family values." See, for example,

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Ariès 1962. Simon Schama (1987) notes high rates of child abandonment in some early modern cities, data that are scarcely comforting to those who would idealize the premodern family. However, like Ariès, he also points out, this time from seventeenth century Dutch evidence, that child-centeredness and concern for the specific needs of children are historical products, sensitive to particular demographic and socioeconomic contexts. Given that available data for these judgments is based very largely on the European aristocracy or bourgeoisie, it is hard to tell whether their arguments can be generalized. It is nonetheless difficult to sustain Coleman's idealized premodern family on the basis of such data as exists.

3. For a very judicious review of the historical use of "rational economic man" assumptions see Snooks 1993, especially chapter 6.
4. The major texts are Weber 1978a and 1978b. Additional commentary may be found in Brubaker 1984 and Schluchter 1981.
5. The initial statement of Parsons's attempt at theoretical multi-dimensionality is contained in Parsons, Bales, and Shils 1953. The approach is developed further in Parsons and Smelser 1956. For further commentary see Holton and Turner 1986.

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Zygmunt Bauman

COMMUNITARIANISM, FREEDOM, AND THE NATION-STATE

As many authors have acknowledged in these pages, Will Kymlicka has produced an admirable attempt to reconcile the differences of communitarians and liberals. However, Kymlicka's synthesis ignores the aspects of each theory which make his task impossible. Particularly, his analysis rests upon a misleading picture of communitarian community and an incomplete appreciation of the divergent liberal and communitarian understandings of freedom and pluralism. In the process of demonstrating the incompatibility of these theories, the similarities between communitarianism and nationalism are explored.

In the Spring 1994 (vol. 8, no. 2) issue of *Critical Review*, a number of prominent political philosophers published their thoughts on the possibility of reconciling liberalism and communitarianism. The issue makes an excellent starting point for the consideration of important issues, stakes, and prospects in the ongoing liberal/communitarian debate.

Several contributions to the exchange were prompted by the publication of Will Kymlicka's *Liberalism, Community and Culture* (1991)—"a penetrating, highly illuminating, and exceptionally lucid book," as Ronald Beiner (himself the author of another influential study, *What's the Matter with Liberalism?* [1992]) writes. What made

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Kymlicka's book so interesting and worthy of extended comment is that it confronted point blank the arguments raised against liberal theory by the most influential spokesmen of communitarianism: Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Sandel, Charles Taylor, and Michael Walzer. Kymlicka's goal was to defuse such arguments by either showing that their opposition to liberal tenets is wholly illusory, or by accommodating them into a new, improved version of liberalism. Also of note was his book's overall peace-making tone: its underlying conviction—refreshing and welcome after years of acrimony—that, short of merger and unity, a lasting, friendly cohabitation between these adversaries is feasible.

Among Kymlicka's propositions, the one with which his commentators are in the most sympathy is that the plurality of cultures and cultural allegiances is something which liberalism, far from frowning upon, considers as an asset: as cultures multiply, so do the choices open to the individual, and liberalism is all about freedom of choice. The liberal, Kymlicka suggests, should therefore be interested in actively promoting variety and resisting all homogenizing pressures.

Why this opinion is seen as "highly illuminating" by the discussants seems at first glance to be something of a mystery, since on the same ground cultural (and even moral) pluralism has been defended and praised by foremost liberal thinkers for a long time.[1] Perhaps, however, the excitement is less mysterious than it seems; the argument, usually stated in liberal thought in a generalized and thus relatively uncontroversial form, serves in Kymlicka's book as an olive branch to the communitarian critics of liberalism.

By the same token, he suggests that the repeatedly declared liberal devotion to pluralism may be stretched far enough to embrace the kind of pluralism the communitarians promote, and so he renders their charges against liberal thought null and void. In order to do so, Kymlicka gives the liberal call for variety a wording meant to placate communitarian grievances without offending liberal consciences: "Liberals should be concerned with the fate of cultural structures, not because they have some moral status of their own, but because it's only through having a rich and secure cultural structure that people can become aware, in a vivid way, of the options available to them" (Kymlicka 1991, 165). So the liberals may stay happy, since pluralism now, as before, is not recognized as a finite value in its own right; but the communitarians may feel appeased, since whatever their motives, liberals promise to respect and

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even promote the plural cultures so dear to the communitarian heart by imputing to the "cultural structure" an instrumental value in promoting liberal goals. Communitarian joy may well be rendered even more complete by the hand-on-hip acceptance by a liberal writer of what they have all along held *against* liberalism—namely, that "having a rich and secure cultural structure" is a good and humane thing. (They may be worried, though, as well as baffled, by a surprising suggestion that this "secure structure" is a good thing because it prompts awareness of options; but then, what it does or does not promote is an empirical statement, not an issue of policy, and thus may be quietly left to future quarrels among social-scientific archivists. And if this is how the liberals prefer, for the sake of convenience, to couch their surrender, why should those whose point has been thereby granted object?)

Pluralism and Freedom

It seems that Kymlicka's stratagem is to get both sides to agree on a joint policy statement through convincing each not only that their goals have not been compromised, but that the signing of the agreement testifies to the intention of each side to go on pursuing those goals to yet better effect.

This, however, glosses over the genuine bone of contention, and does not actually resolve the controversy. The pluralism loved by liberals (or the pluralism they profess to love) is not the pluralism loved (really or putatively) by communitarians. All similarities, one is tempted to say, are purely coincidental. The pluralism liberals hold dear is external to the human individual; it is a profusion of choices between ways of being human and living one's life. The pluralism of the communitarians is of the internalized kind; it stands for a refusal, or inability, to consider other forms of life as options—for being determined or fated to remain what one is, to stay this way whatever happens, and resist all temptation to the contrary. To put it in a nutshell, liberal pluralism stands for individual freedom, while communitarian pluralism stands for the group's power to limit individual freedom.

Communitarian theorists, notably MacIntyre, complain about the skin-deep, volatile, and insecure nature of the identities obtainable under a liberal regime of free choice and the "disentrenchment" of formative structures. They hanker after identities which are neither

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phony nor shallow (that is, to deploy Weber's metaphor, identities more like iron cages than cloaks lying lightly on individuals' shoulders, ready to be taken off at any time), identities that, for reasons not at all obvious yet never argued explicitly, they consider equivalent to *meaningful* identities. Again for reasons not at all clear and even less convincing, communitarians want the outcome of the choice to be settled before the act of choosing occurs: to a communitarian mind, the good choice is the choice of what is already given—the discovery of, and the giving a conscious expression to, an "historical identity" transmitted through birth. (One may recall Mao's policy of "let a hundred flowers bloom"; the blooming was innocuous to Mao, because there was no doubt that one flower, the sole one deserving to bloom forever, would overwhelm and stifle all the others.) The tribute paid to individual choice is no more than lip service; ideally, freedom ought to be employed solely to choose unfreedom; voluntariness means here using individual volition to abstain from exercising free will. The true choice has been made and signed before the individual's birth. The life that follows birth is (or should be) all about finding out what that choice was, and behaving accordingly.

Communitarian theory is a *modern* ideology, constructed and preached under modern conditions—that is, under circumstances in which choice is not only a possibility, but a reality difficult to escape; modern individuals are "sentenced" to a lifetime of choosing. And so communitarian hints about the irretrievably "encumbered" nature of individual identity stop short of developing a fully-fledged theory of ascriptive determinism. Communitarian-style determinism is not automatic; paradoxically, its work cannot be completed without the active cooperation of human will and choice. Fate runs its full course only when willingly (joyfully!) embraced by the fated individual. But admitting this, communitarian philosophy places willy-nilly the communities of tradition and history it promotes on the same footing with all other "groups of belonging" (including those in direct or oblique competition with "rooted" reference groups); all such groups "hold" their members only as much as the members "stick" to them; perpetuation of all such groups depends on the intensity and resiliency of their "members' " active allegiance. It is risky to leave the destiny of the favored, "rooted" reference groups ("communities of tradition") to the vagaries of open competition. One would much prefer to have the favorable outcome of the competition guaranteed in advance. But

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this means *privileging* one choice over all the others, making the odds against other choices overwhelming, and increasing the stakes entailed in making the "right" choice. At this point, though, communitarianism leaves the ostensibly philosophical discussion of human existential predicament, and enters the realm of practical politics.

Nationalism and Communitarianism

The paradox is not new, of course, and not of the communitarians' making. It has haunted from the start modern nationalism, of which the present-day communitarianism is, so to speak, a discontinuous continuation (racism was then, as it is now, a constantly tempting path of escape from the paradox nationalism and communitarianism share). Maurice Barrès, one of the most insightful and influential philosophers of nationalism, struggled with the same problem: nationalist beliefs are pointless without the assumption that there is a point "from which all things can be seen in true proportions"—but also without the premise that this point cannot be designed, but only found, recovered, or lost; this must be a point fixed beforehand, but *it must be discovered and fortified by each individual, using his skills, reason, and will.* In other words, the human lot is inevitable, but this inevitability of fate works through voluntary efforts.

> I must place myself at the point demanded by my eyes, as they have been formed in the course of centuries, at the point from which all things make themselves to the Frenchman's measure. The assembly of just and true relations between the objects and the concrete man, the Frenchman, are French truth and justice: to discover these relations is French reason. Pure nationalism is nothing else than being aware of such a point's existence, searching it, and—having reached it—clinging to it in our arts, our politics, and all our activities. (Barrès 1902, 8–13)

We know where this lyrical encomium of roots has pointed, with an irresistible momentum of its own: to an overwhelming urge to *make sure* that the "I must" means what it says, that the "discovery" is made by everybody, and that everyone "clings" to what has been discovered in "all activities." And there was but one way of making sure: using the state prerogative of legislated coercion to render

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"missing the point" as unlikely as possible, and "finding the point" virtually inescapable. The nation without a state would be, after all, just one "reference group" among many—forever uncertain of its survival, buffetted by cross-waves of changing fashions, having to appeal daily to flickering loyalties, and having to lean over backwards to deliver proofs of its advantages over its competitors. A nation-state (the ideal of a nation made into the state's flesh) could, on the other hand, *legislate* loyalty and determine in advance the results of free choice. The postulated roots could be legislated into existence and taken care of by state agencies of law and order, a state-defined canon of cultural heritage, and a state-authorized history curriculum.

Let us recall that the purpose of all this government activity was to put paid to the grip in which "communities" (*local* traditions, customs, dialects, loyalties) held together the would-be patriots of the nation. The idea was to superimpose over the mosaic of communitarian "particularisms" the nation's interest—overriding all other interests, including what this or that individual might believe was his or her "own," individual interest. In terms of practical politics, this meant the dismantling or legal disempowering of all *pouvoirs intermèdiaires* that might claim more than delegated authority.

From Charles Taylor's contribution to the debate in *Critical Review*, we learn that after all of these (as it has turned out, inconclusive) efforts toward national unification, "minority communities" are "struggling to maintain themselves." They struggle to maintain themselves, that is, *as communities.* And this means in turn that "these people are striving for more than their rights as individuals" (Taylor 1994, 257–58). Taylor is undaunted by the fact that it is only thanks to the old stratagem of *petitio principii* that his statement makes sense: what was to be proved has been entered as an axiomatic premise. If there *is* something more than people's "rights as individuals" (that is, if there is something so important that it justifies the suspension of the rights of individuals *qua* individuals), then struggle is inevitable and any benevolent person owes the fighters sympathy and assistance. But what is that "something more"?

"Something more" (let us repeat, that "something" which makes certain restrictions of the individual right to choose palatable and even welcome) is the "goal of *survivance*"; this is, according to Taylor, "the continuance of the community through future generations." Put in simpler and more practical terms, the pursuit of the

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"goal of *survivance*" calls for the right of the community to limit or preempt the choices of younger and not-yet-born generations, to decide for them what their choices should be like. In other words, what is demanded here is the power of enforcement; to make sure that people act in certain ways rather than in others, to taper their range of options, to manipulate the probabilities; to make them do what they otherwise would not do, to make them less free than they otherwise would be. Why is it important to do so? Taylor points out that this is to be done (how often we have heard such an argument) in people's own well-understood interest, since "human beings can only make meaningful choices of their way of life against a background of alternatives which can only come to them through the language and cultural tradition of their society" (Taylor 1994, 259).

A similar idea was expressed over and over again by the generations of prophets and court poets of the nation-state, and it is not immediately obvious why under Taylor's pen it should be an argument in favor of the "struggling minorities" cause. For the change of address to become justified, one needs first to reveal a hidden corollary: namely, the realization that the nation-state has not delivered on its promise; that for one reason or another it is now bankrupt as a fount of meaningful choices of ways of life; that nationalism devoid of its state foundation has lost the authority without which its overriding of individual rights is neither feasible nor acceptable; and that in the resulting void, it is the "struggling minorities" who are now believed to be in the second line of trenches, where "meaningful choice" can be protected from slaughter. Those struggling minorities are now hoped to succeed at the task which the nation-state has definitely failed.

Communitarian Philosophy and Postmodern Reality

The striking similarity between nationalist and communitarian hopes and paradoxes is not at all accidental. Both "future perfect" visions are, after all, philosophers' reactions to the widespread experience of acute and abrupt "disembedding," caused by the accelerated collapse of the frames in which identities were habitually inscribed. Nationalism was a response to the wholesale destruction of the cottage industry of local identities, and the ensuing devaluation

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of matter-of-factly produced and endorsed patterns of life. The nationalist vision arose from the desperate hope that clarity and security of existence could be rebuilt at a higher, supralocal level of social organization, with national membership and state citizenship melted into one. For reasons too vast and numerous to list here, that hope failed to come true. The nation-state proved to be the incubator of a modern society ruled not so much by a unity of feelings as by the diversity of unemotional market interests. Its thorough job of uprooting local loyalties looks in retrospect not so much like a production of higher-level identities, but as a site-clearing operation for the market-led confidence game of quickly assembled and dismantled modes of self-description.

And so, once more, meaningful identities ("meaningful" in the sense once postulated by nationalists, now by the communitarians) have proven hard to come by, while keeping them in place and intact, for however brief a moment, taxes the taught and learned juggling skills of the individuals being identified much beyond their capacity. Since the idea that "society," institutionalized as the state, will lend a helping hand does not hold much water, no wonder eyes shift in a different direction. By an irony of history, however, they drift towards entities whose radical destruction was seen, at the beginning of modernity, as the *sine qua non* of "meaningful choice." It is now the much-maligned "natural communities of origin," necessarily lesser than the nation-state, and once described by modernizing propaganda as parochial, backwater, prejudice-ridden, oppressive, and stultifying, which are looked to as the trusty executors of streamlining, de-randomizing, and meaning-saturating human choices.

There is no denying that the life of a free agent is not perfect. The torments that critics try to capture in speaking of our "shallow and meaningless identity" are genuine. The torments are many, but they all boil down to the noxious and sickening feeling of perpetual uncertainty about everything regarding the future. The fast and continuously accelerating pace of change makes one thing certain: that the future will not be like the present. But the quick succession of futures teach that today's present does not bind the future; and so there is little the individual can do today to ensure that the future he or she desires will be achieved. Living in a *Risikogesellschaft* (the extremely apt term coined by Ulrich Beck), we may say, rebounds in personal experience as *Risikoleben*. As Beck and

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Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (1995) put it, "certainties have fragmented into questions which are now spinning around in people's heads. But it is more than that. Social action needs routines in which to be enacted." And it is

> precisely this level of pre-conscious "collective habitualizations" of matters taken for granted, that is breaking down into a cloud of possibilities to be thought about and negotiated. The deep layer of foreclosed decisions is being forced up into the level of decision-making. Hence the irritation, the endless chafing of the open wound—and the defensive-aggressive reaction. . . . Life loses its self-evident quality.[3]

Trying to grasp an infuriatingly evasive identity, demanded with the same superhuman power as it is denied, individuals fight a losing battle. Dissatisfaction punctuates and poisons the delights of their successive avatars. What makes the prospect of a radical cure dimmer still is the fact that individuals torn between intoxicating freedom and horrifying uncertainty desire the impossible; they want no less than to eat their cake and have it, too—relishing and practicing their freedom of choice while having the "happy ending" guaranteed. Whatever name they choose to call their worry, what individuals truly resent is the risk innate in freedom; whatever they call their dreams, what they want is a *risk-free freedom*. The trouble is, however, that freedom and risk grow and diminish only together. Thus the ultimate solution to the plight of the modern individual remains unavailable.

Pseudo-solutions abound, however, thanks to an inexhaustible demand for straightening the twisted loop of contradictory pains and desires. At times when uncertainty is particularly acute, the dream of homely security prevails over the allure of adventure. This happened at the onset of modernity with the restructuring of structures and the reevaluation of values, paving the way to the early appeal of the nationalist promise of homely tranquility. It is happening once more today, with the onset of the postmodern stage of the modern revolution—the radical change in the rules by which the game of livelihood is played, the thorough redefinition of all particular, acquired skills and of the meaning of skill as such, the disavowal of the habitualized patterns of partnership, and the devaluation of the social know-how which those patterns required.

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This is paving the way for the sudden popularity of communitarianism: nationalism, phase two.

Admittedly, old-fashioned nationalism is far from running its course, particularly in the post-colonial world, in Africa, and in Eastern Europe. There, the idea of a nation providing a home for the lost and the confused is still fresh and untried. It is all in the future (even though nationalism, like communitarianism, deploys with gusto the language of heritage, roots, and shaped past), and the future is the natural place in which to invest one's hopes and cravings. For Western Europe, on the other hand, nationalism, together with its crowning achievement, the nation-state, lies fairly and squarely in the past. It failed to resolve in the past what once more is to be resolved now, and it would be foolish to expect that the second time around it will perform any better. Europe knows as well what the post-colonial world does not know or does not care much about: that the closer the nation-state's works approach the ideal of a solid foundation and secure home, the less freedom there is to move around the house, and the air inside the house gets rank and foul. For these, as well as for other reasons which I have elaborated upon elsewhere,[4] nothing the present-day nation-states are able or willing to do seems adequate to abate the anguish of uncertainty that devours the psychic resources of the postmodern individual.

Under the circumstances, what makes the visions of natural community conjured up in communitarian writings so attractive is that it has been imagined independently from, and even in opposition to, the state. It looks as if the state, in resonance with popular feelings, has been abandoned by communitarian philosophers to the risk-producing side of human existence: it takes care of freedom, but in so doing it leaves individuals to their patently inadequate resources, struggling to navigate among the risks of freedom in order to sail into the haven of "meaningful choice." As formerly with the nation, so now the "community" represents the dream of a safe haven. This haven, however, is located far from explored itineraries, having been moved to a place lonely sailors have thus far been discouraged from visiting. However eager the communitarians are to "root" this place in a (genuine or invented) premodern past, it is the modern spirit of adventure, of exploring the unexplored, or trying the untried, which makes it an attractive destination for the philosophers and their readers alike. "Perhaps this time . . ." is the sentiment.

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The "communities" of communitarian philosophers are expected to enchant and attract for the same reason the nations of nationalist philosophers once did: for their homely coziness, and the promises they make of mutual support and understanding, of a harmony of interests, and of a unity of desires. Once more, the dilemma as old as modernity itself is left out of the account or glossed over: either (i) "community" is a *result* of individual choices, an entity made and freely chosen (in Roberto Unger's words, "accidental, made up, pasted together") as the result of unpredictable coalitions, unforeseen consequences, and missed opportunities,[5] and thus its very existence, and the choices of loyalty which sustain that existence, are incurably burdened with the anxieties of risk-taking and of living under conditions of permanent uncertainty; or, (ii) "community" *precedes* all choice, in the sense of a priori predisposing individuals to stay loyal to its values and behavioral precepts (through indoctrination, drill, control)—and thus community membership comes into direct conflict with individual freedom of self-constitution, self-assertion and self-definition.

This dilemma signals a tradeoff: the value acquired and cherished needs to be sacrificed in order to gain the value missed. But the homely coziness of no-choice community owes its allure solely to the hardships of daily freedom. Without that freedom, such "community" has all the attraction of prison life.

The dilemma remains today as genuine and unsolved as it ever was, and no amount of argument is likely to square this particular circle. It preoccupies the philosophers, but it also saturates the experience of the postmodern individual, reiterated daily in a world that is fragmented, episodic, and hostile to consistent, consequential action: the individual burdened with the task of making daily choices and getting them confirmed and validated among the cacophony of contradictory and ephemeral ideals and precepts. In this experience originates an acute need for reassurance, which in contemporary society is sought in two kinds of authority: that of the experts and that of numbers.

Hence today's proliferation of analysts, advisers and counsellors, basking in the glory of the latest word of science and that of the self-help textbooks they produce; their overall message is "choose, but choose wisely." Hence also the reassurance derived from awareness that many "others like me" share my predicament and choose similar "solutions" to similar "problems." Here, the message is

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"choose what others have chosen, and you cannot go wrong." Between themselves, the two authorities draw the line separating the torments of individuality from the agony of madness.

The search for the second kind of authority, that of numbers, sediments the "neo-tribes" (or, more precisely, *postulated* tribes), the wholes that, in the final account (and contrary to their promise), seldom prove to be more than the sum of their parts, and whose imputed authority is measured by the determination of each part to make sums. Such neo-tribes are products of multiple choices and are no more durable than the choices that made them—that is, as long as the choosers retain their freedom of choosing, so that they are free to revoke their decision when the need arises. Neo-tribes, conjured up with the intention to give choices the solidity the choosers sorely miss, share in the inconsequentiality of *choices*, and change little about the episodicity of the choosers' lives.

These are the problems haunting those who are in a position to choose. Freedom of choice is, however, a graduated quality; indeed, it has become a major stratifying variable in our multidimensionally stratified society. In a postmodern consumer society choosing is everybody's fate, but the ranges of realistic choices differ, and so do the supplies of resources needed to make them. It is the individual responsibility for choice that is equally distributed, not the individually owned means to act on that responsibility. Notoriously, casting everyone equally into the situation of "chooser by necessity" does not promote equality of the practical ability to choose. For all we know, the effect is exactly opposite. As Jerzy Jedlicki (1993, 35) pointed out, the liberal vision of a universal and equally awarded right to choose failed to take account of the fact that "adding freedom of action to the fundamental inequality of social condition will result in inequality yet deeper than before." What liberal society offers with one hand, it tends to take back with the other; the duty of freedom without the resources that would permit a truly free choice is for many of those affected a recipe for life without dignity, filled instead with humiliation and self-abnegation.

This is all too real a problem in a society organized around liberal principles, and one which communitarians purport to tackle. Yet the problem consists in matching the practical ability to choose against the requirements imposed on individuals by the necessity of choosing. Communitarians propose, instead, to heal the painful consequences of the mismatch not by raising individual rights to

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the level of the possibilities that freedom entails *in potentia*, but by making a virtue out of the restrictions imposed on the right to choose, and thus making the actualization of that potential still more difficult.

As is so often the case in the practice of social engineering, the medicine proposed has every chance of rendering the ailment more acute.

That values more important than the rights of individuals, or "*survivance,*" ought to take precedence over individual entitlements are notions that appeal to human conscience, and have every right to trouble liberal complacency—as long as they emanate from those who lack the ability to choose, in a society in which being an individual is tantamout to being a free chooser; as long as they serve as reminders that the job of freedom-promotion is far from complete, and that its completion would require rectifying the present distribution of resources, which deprives large sectors of would-be individuals from exercising their individuality. Otherwise, however, the implications of these ideas will be to curtail that freedom. Ronald Beiner (1994, 253) justly points out that in his zeal to accommodate communitarian postulates in the liberal promotion of freedom, Kymlicka "does not fully face up to the fact that what he is advocating as an entailment of liberalism is assistance for a community to fend off liberalization of its way of life." One recalls the Soviet rulers' proposition that the ultimate community goal, the abolition of the state, was to be achieved by radically increasing its coercive power. And one recalls also the consequences of that instance of double-thought.

Philosophical well-wishers on both sides of the liberal/communitarian divide all too often courteously close their eyes on the realities of those "minorities" whose cause they are prompted to advocate by their laudable sympathy for the left-behind and deprived. Frequently the reality, when contemplated at close quarters, and particularly from inside, does not look exactly prepossessing. More often than not the "*survivance*" postulate turns into an awesome weapon of subjugation and tyranny, exercised by the acclaimed or self-proclaimed guardians of the "community" (ethnic, racial, religious) and its traditional values in order to exact obeisance from their hapless wards and to stamp out every inkling of autonomous choice. Rights and freedom, dear to the liberal heart, are appealed

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to here to promote the demotion of individual rights and the denial of freedom. "Minorities" are products of illiberal state practices; but their cause is all too fit to be deployed in the service of the illiberal practices of "community leaders."

Communitarianism is not a remedy for the inherent defects of liberalism. The contradiction between them is genuine, and no amount of philosophical gymnastics may heal it. Both communitarianism and liberalism are projections of dreams born of the real contradiction inherent in the plight of autonomous individuals. Each one is but a one-sided projection, which for the sake of its own coherence tends to gloss over the fact that none of the virtues of modern individualism may survive the elimination of its banes. Community without freedom is a project as horrifying as freedom without community. For better or worse, the life of the autonomous individual cannot be navigated between the two equally unattractive extremes. Steering clear of both is the only chance for a meaningful and dignified life individuals may reasonably hope for, however much is done by the philosophers to keep them from facing that truth.

NOTES

1. For instance, both the necessity and the desirability of pluralism have been emphatically maintained by John Rawls (1984), for whom the multiplicity of rational yet mutually incompatible religious, philosophical, and moral beliefs is the hallmark of liberal, democratic societies. Rawls points out that the variety of views is by itself a good thing. Liberal thinkers have always defended freely chosen beliefs, and have decried state attempts to impose choices by force. As Jerzy Szacki (1994, 245) succinctly sums it up: to the two questions—May the government take sides in moral conflicts? and Can such conflicts ever be overcome?—"liberalism answers in the negative."
2. According to Barrès, there is only one thing that I may will with any effect: to be, in all I think and do, determined by *la terre et les morts*—to say to myself, "I wish to live with these masters, and, by making them consciously objects of my cult, to partake fully of their strength" (Barrès 1992, 16). The alternative is *déracinement*—a horrifying state of disempowerment, a limp body without a backbone.
3. For an extensive analysis and persuasive interpretation of the process of "individualization," understood as primarily an unstoppably rising level of uncertainty and "subjectivization" of risks, see Beck and Gernsheim-Beck 1990 and 1994. In the latter they pithily summarize their findings: "Take

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whatever you like—God, Nature, truth, science, technology, morality, love, marriage—modernity transformed everything into 'risky freedoms'" (1994, 11). For instance, "marriage—like driving with excessive speed on a winding road—a personal, risky undertaking, not eligible for insurance" (1994, 11, 24). Consult as well Christopher Lasch's essential book, *The Minimal Self* (1984).

4. See Baumann 1995, especially the chapter entitled "Europe of Nations, Europe of Tribes."
5. Unger points out that "if the triumph of certain institutions and ideas was relatively accidental, their replacement can also more easily be imagined as realistic" (1987, 167).

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Liah Greenfeld

THE WORTH OF NATIONS: SOME ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF NATIONALISM

Accounts that attribute nationalism to capitalism or industrialization face the problem of nationalism in late-stage capitalist, or as some might say, post-industrial, societies. While increasing social significance has been attributed to economic growth throughout human history, reasons for this are far from self-evident. By looking at arguments made by Marx, List, and Smith, a new understanding of the relationship between nationalism and economics emerges—one that explains the attribution of social importance to economic development by revealing it as a function of nationalism.

What profit or loss is a society to expect when it defines itself as a nation?

The relationship between nationalism and economics is usually seen in terms of the structuralist or materialist approach that has dominated the social sciences in the last half-century. This approach regards economic processes, such as industrialization, commercialization, and the growth of capitalism, as fundamental, and everything else—social relations, political institutions, and culture, i.e., the ways people perceive things—as secondary, reflective, or at the

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least, dependent on these fundamental processes. On the principle that all secondary things are created equal, but some are nevertheless more secondary than others, culture, as a rule, is believed to be the farthest removed from the material objectivity of economics, and therefore the least important. In the words of a famous author, of whom I shall have more to say in this essay, culture has "no history, no development" (Marx 1978, 155) independent of economic processes. As an epiphenomenon, culture is a mental projection of economic development, with definite forms of culture corresponding to each stage of economic progress, or, alternatively, with definite forms of culture being functional requirements of such stages, called forth by the systemic needs of each economic system to facilitate the realization of its economic potential.

Nationalism, being essentially a matter of perception and thus culture, and corresponding chronologically to the development of capitalism and industrialization, is therefore seen either as a reflection or, in more sophisticated renditions of this general thesis, as a functional prerequisite of economic modernization.[1] Put crudely, nationalism is believed to be *caused* by capitalism and industrialization. This position has some intriguing implications which today probably deprive its proponents of sleep. These implications follow logically from the postulate of nationalism's dependency on economics: if nationalism is a product of a certain stage of economic development—presumably early capitalism and industrialization—then the passing of this stage must imply the passing of nationalism. Now we today, it is claimed, live in the period of late capitalism and, possibly, in the post-industrial society, yet nationalism, unfortunately, is not gone, nor does it show any signs of being gone soon. This refusal of humanity to listen to the reason of its most respected social scientists and to abide by the laws in which the latter place such faith is shocking in many respects, not the least because it demonstrates exactly how irrelevant the social sciences have become (in their blind devotion to the materialist image of social reality) to the real world in which most of us live.

Of course, the structuralist position has not been unchallenged. Max Weber opposed it in the past; so do, emphatically, some distinguished authors in the present. Peter Berger has developed the idea of "economic culture," insisting on the importance of cultural factors in shaping economic processes;[2] he heads an institute devoted to the study of these factors. The same idea of culture's formative

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effect on economic behavior is at the center of Claudio Veliz's recent book, *The New World of the Gothic Fox: Culture and Economy in English and Spanish America* (1994).

Nevertheless, the structuralist-materialist approach to social reality remains dominant. It is dominant, *inter alia*, because it corresponds so well to the preeminence of the economic sphere in the lives of modern Western societies, particularly the United States. Generally speaking, Americans and, by and large, other Westerners, who could not care less for social scientists, do regard prosperity as the cause of happiness, and economic development as the foundation of all other social processes, an unmitigated good, the necessary condition of a just society. We have come to believe that if only we achieve a certain satisfactory level of economic development, all else would follow automatically, thereby making economic development the focus of our care and concern. This view shapes our private lives as much as it does foreign policy. (Why else would we push Russia, against the will of her people and despite obvious political costs, to adopt market reform, if it were not for our firm conviction that market reform today means liberal democracy tomorrow?) One hundred and fifty years ago this was a revolutionary view.

In this essay I want to raise the question of (and attempt to account for) how this view gained ascendancy and how the economic sphere came to occupy such a central place in our thinking and experience. This question is very rarely raised. Economists and economic historians discuss endlessly the reasons for the relative prosperity of nations, their success or failure in the industrial race, but they do not ask why such a race exists at all and why should nations want to enter it. This they regard as self-evident. But there is nothing self-evident about it. In most societies known to history, economic activities held the place occupied by the classes which participated in them—the bottom of the social ladder and value hierarchy. These activities did not connote status, and therefore did not attract talent. Prosperity was better than destitution, to be sure, but it was rarely a self-standing goal in life and far from being equated with happiness. In fact, it was often seen as an obstacle: St. Matthew, you will remember, suggested that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (19:24). In our time—and in our society—this has, obviously, changed.[3]

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Only a linear and deterministic view of history, assuming a succession of stages and uniform systemic needs corresponding to them, and oblivious to the empirical differences between cultures and the contingent nature of the historical process, would justify regarding such change as natural. This view of history has a name: it is called "historical materialism"—history according to Marx. But, counterintuitive as it seems, Marxism, abandoned in the lands traditionally dedicated to its propagation and proven wrong by experience, is remarkably similar to the dominant Anglo-American view of the world. The two positions differ in regard to the nature of economic processes and forces (whereas Marxism stresses "forces of production," our "economism" emphasizes the interplay between supply and demand), but in terms of their ontological and anthropological presuppositions—namely ideas about the constitution of social reality and human nature—there is very little disagreement.

Marx and German Romantic Nationalism

Marx was among the first to postulate the principle of the centrality of economics in social life, but he was not the only one and he did not arrive at this idea independently. It appears now that the immediate reason for Marx actually to turn his attention to economics was the publication in 1841 of *The National System of Political Economy* by his contemporary Friedrich List,[4] who is still considered in some circles to be a major economic theorist. Both Marx and List were German thinkers and yet only marginally German citizens. Both were motivated by German national sentiment, and both accepted without reservation the tenets of German Romantic nationalism.

In 1845 Marx attempted a critique of List, which he never completed and which remained unpublished until the 1970s.[5] Yet to understand Marx's economic determinism, which informs so much of our thinking today, it is necessary to begin with the two essays and several unfinished manuscripts written even earlier than the "List Critique": the 1843 "Essay on the Jewish Question," the "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction," and the "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844."[6]

The theory of economic determinism was not a result of an empirical investigation. It resulted, rather, from an attempt to find a so-

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lution for the personal problem with which Marx was faced. The problem consisted in the irreconcilable contradiction between two aspects of Marx's identity, the fact that he was both a German nationalist and a Jew. Being a German nationalist in the 1840s implied being preoccupied with the place of Germany vis-à-vis the two Western nations occupying the top of the international hierarchy of the time (England and France—the standard-bearers of political modernity), coping with the sense of national inferiority, and searching for ways to overcome it. It also implied sharing in a particular worldview, chief elements of which included: 1) a belief that the world was naturally divided into a finite number of nations; 2) a belief that a nation was a corporate entity constituted by language and, ultimately, race, and endowed with a spirit and will of its own, which subsumed and dominated the wills of its individual members; 3) a belief that nations were hierarchically ranked in accordance with their actual or potential ability to contribute to the overall advancement of humanity; 4) a belief that this ability was reflected mainly in the nation's cultural achievement and was therefore dependent on its intellectuals; and 5) a belief that Germany possessed a superior culture, and was therefore destined to a superior role in world history, which implied that its inferiority vis-à-vis England and France was only temporary.

To gain for their nation its rightful place ahead of England and France, German patriots needed either to modernize it politically—that is, turn German subjects into citizens and commit an essentially traditional, rigidly stratified society, based on the notions of hierarchy and authority, to the values of equality and liberty—which would have been very difficult to accomplish; or, alternatively, they could prove England and France unworthy of the superior position they occupied in the eyes of the world, which was much easier. German patriots were a rational lot and opted, by and large, for the latter project. Having dedicated themselves to it, they spared no effort. There was no crime of which England and France (especially France, for some obvious and less obvious historical reasons) were not accused, from having "pitiful" philosophy and deplorable taste in drama (which was Engels's objection to French culture) to making "noisy and materialistic" revolutions.[7]

Young Karl Marx shared the enthusiasm of his compatriots and yearned to take part in their patriotic undertaking. As a Jew, however, he found himself in an awkward situation. Anti-Semitism was

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an integral part of German nationalism since its earliest days in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Though believed an "Asiatic folk," alien to Europe, the Jews were seen as the personification of the West and all the evil with which the latter came to be associated. Excluded from the national communities in which they resided, they were ascribed their own separate nationality (quite independent of their religious affiliation, for, in the eyes of their German fellow-citizens, neither baptism nor atheism affected it). This made being German patriots and sharing in the values of German nationalism psychologically problematic for the Jews. To secure a part in Germany's inevitable triumph over the Western powers, Marx had to rid himself, first, of his other identity. This proving impossible, he reinterpreted the basic propositions of German nationalism in a way that eliminated the Jewish problem.

It is not coincidental that the first issue Marx addressed was the Jewish problem. In his famous essay, "On the Jewish Question" (Marx 1978c), he attempted to resolve this problem for himself in a twofold manner. First, he declared his own unequivocal and principled dislike for the Jews, in whom he discerned "the contempt for theory, for art, for history, and for man as an end in himself"—all qualities attributed by the German Romantics to the West—and whom he saw as the embodiment of "a universal *antisocial* element of the *present* time"; thus he dissociated himself from them. Second, he defined Jewish nationality as "illusory" and "chimerical," for it was but a reflection of the money-worshipping materialism so characteristic of modern Western society; thus, the reformation of humanity, its liberation from this materialism, would cause the illusion of the Jews to disappear.

Having defined this troublesome ethnicity out of existence, Marx proceeded to his next essay, in which he proudly asserted his German identity. This essay, the "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction" (Marx 1978a)—which represents one of the finest examples of the Romantic nationalist argument—dealt, as Marx declared in the preamble, with Germany. Marx tried to cope with the problem of Germany's inferiority vis-à-vis the West, of which he was painfully aware. His solution was to present it as superiority. He accused the West, and specifically France and England, of social degeneracy, for the reason that it left "out of account the *real man*, or only satisfie[d] the *whole man* in an illusory way" (Marx 1978a, 59). And, like many a patriot before

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him, he was confident that salvation would come from Germany, because it was not a part of the West and was not, like the West, modern: it deserved to stand ahead of England and France exactly because it lagged behind them.

The chief characteristic that distinguished Germany from the degenerate materialistic West, turning its backwardness into an advantage and guaranteeing its ability to perform its glorious mission and assume its place in the world, for Marx, as for other German nationalists of the time, was German philosophy. "If the whole of German development were at the level of German political development," wrote Marx (it is worth noting that *economic development* was mentioned nowhere in the text), "a German could have no greater part in contemporary problems than can a *Russian*. . . ." "Fortunately," he asserted, "we Germans are not Scythians" (Marx 1978a, 58). The German spirit soared high above the backwater of German reality, and from its heights was able to observe the imperfections of "the advanced nations" beyond the Rhine and plot their reformation. Or revolution. Because these imperfections were too serious to be dealt with in a peaceful manner.

But, for a revolution to take place, there had to exist a mass, some group of people who would carry out the dictates of German philosophy. "A class must be formed," declared Marx, which will fight not for partial interests and benefits, as did revolutionary classes in advanced nations, but for a complete emancipation of man. This class "is the proletariat" (Marx 1978a, 64). Marx did not say that a proletariat existed in Germany, he said that it had to be formed, but given that it was called for by German philosophy, this was as good as done. More importantly, at this point the proletariat was defined not as an economic, but as a primarily ethical category of people; it was a *German* revolutionary class, distinguished from the revolutionary classes of Western nations by the scope of its aspirations, which transcended special (including national) interests and aimed at nothing less than the liberation—salvation—of humanity.

From this point on, however, Marx's thinking began to develop as an economic (or economistic) doctrine. The proletariat, as we saw, was first brought in by Marx on a wave of patriotism, as a human mass needed to realize the dictates of German philosophy and therefore German national aspirations. The working class itself—and the very fact that this was the *working* class—was of secondary importance; it was a tool, a means to the glory of Germany. Marx's patri-

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otic enthusiasm reflected his conviction that he was one of "us Germans," a member of the national community destined to play the role of supreme importance in the world, and could share in its glory. This enthusiasm was predicated on the persuasiveness of the "Essay on the Jewish Question." But the essay was not convincing, and Marx knew it. As a result, already in the "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts" of 1844, the proletariat as an economic class assumed the center stage, while philosophy receded into the background, and Germany, ostensibly, ceased to be of concern for Marx.

Anti-Semitism made it impossible for Marx to remain faithful to the letter of Romantic nationalism. But through an ingenious turn of thought he succeeded in remaining faithful to its spirit, and retained all of its fundamental notions and aspirations, except racism. This was achieved by the substitution of economic "class" for "nation." In Marxism classes took on all the characteristics of Romantic nations. The world was naturally divided into classes which personified forces of production; classes were the actors of history; classes, not men, were real individualities. Men were subsumed under classes; their characters, abilities, behavior, and views were but reflections of the dispositions of classes, as they were of nations in the thought of German patriots of the period. The importance of the class was measured by the contribution it (or the force of production it represented) made to human society as a whole. Like nations, Marxist classes could be partial or pan-human. The view of the proletariat as the universal class, in distinction from all other classes, reflected the idea of Germany as the pan-human nation in distinction from all other nations. National rivalry was replaced by class struggle in general, and in particular by the struggle between industrial labor and capital—the main forces of production of the modern age. But the incarnation of capital remained the West, and it was the West that was doomed to be humbled with it, while the bright future belonged to the proletariat, which (whatever else it was) was the anti-West. Like Germany in the dreams of the patriots, the proletariat would fulfill the aspirations of humanity, triumphing over the "degenerate" societies of the West.

Marx's economization of the Manichean vision of German nationalism, however, implied its universalization. It became applicable and appealed to national patriots everywhere who were hurt by the recognition of their nations' failings and depressed by the spectacle of Western superiority. This explains why Marxism was so

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often the program of national liberation movements (which were invariably anti-Western) and so well served nationalist interests, and also why it has had the greatest appeal in societies that had not reached the stage of socioeconomic development at which, according to the Marxist theory, the adoption of Marxism would make any sense for them.

The economic mechanism ultimately responsible for Marxist salvation added to it the certainty which came with the authority of "science." It guaranteed satisfaction and promised it would not cost anything. In fact, it condemned one to inactivity. Revolutionary activism had no place in mature Marxism: it went against the very essence of historical materialism. This was a major weakness of Marxism and a source of dissatisfaction that drove its adherents into the arms of alternative—activist—ideologies, such as syndicalism and fascism. People drawn to Marxism because of its promise, like Marx himself, wanted to be active participants, rather than mere witnesses, in an historical drama, the outcome of which was economically determined. Ironically, economic determinism made their participation superfluous.

Marxist revolutions as they actually happened, with revolutionary vanguards committed to the ideas of the master steering the masses into compliance, were theoretically impossible. They bore no resemblance to the revolutions brought about by the invisible hand of economic development. These theoretically correct revolutions occurred without willful human intervention, they happened with the inevitability and indifference of natural phenomena because they had to happen, as a child carried to term has to be born. They happened because forces of production burgeoning within the system reached the utmost level of development they could achieve within the existing relations of production, after which point the latter turned into fetters and had to be burst to allow further development. The class that represented the burgeoning forces of production was the ascending class, and it was also the oppressed class, which in the proper Marxist scheme was a purely descriptive, morally neutral term, meaning simply that the development of the productive forces the class represented was artificially restrained. Having destroyed the restraining relations of production in the course of the revolution, the ascending class became the ruling class and erected new social and political structures (relations of production) which facilitated the development of the forces of production it represented, thus also be-

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coming the oppressor class (again in a morally neutral sense), for these relations of production put restraints on burgeoning forces of production represented by other classes.

Each ascending class and—until its forces of production fully developed—each ruling class contributed to and advanced the economic development of the society as a whole. It is entirely wrong, then, to regard Marx as the enemy of capitalism, however obvious it is that he hated it, for, given the nature of his argument, he could only regard it as an altogether positive phenomenon—a major advance in the economic development of humanity in its own right, with the bonus of being the ultimate stage of class struggle, leading to a period of unrestrained production under communism.

The proletariat, representing labor, as I mentioned earlier, was unlike the bourgeoisie, which represented capital, or any other ascending and then ruling class. For labor comprised all the productive forces of humanity. Its liberation, therefore, meant the end of class society. Classes existed so long as there was a forced division of labor, in which each person was assigned—chained—to one particular productive force. In communist society all the productive forces would develop freely and the division of labor would be abolished. Private property was an aspect of the division of labor and it would be abolished, too. This was not because Marx objected to private property on moral grounds (it is beside the point whether he did or not), but because there was to be no need for it, given the level of economic development reached by humanity by the time of the communist revolution. The process was purely economic; whatever the participants thought or felt, it had nothing to do with justice or morality, it was not a matter of choice, and it could not be controlled.

That might have been one reason why, while Marxism was, after all, a form of nationalism in disguise, it did not have a dimension of economic nationalism. Economic nationalism—the intentional promotion of the economic interests of a nation—could make no sense within the framework of Marxist nationalist economism.

List vs. Marx

Friedrich List was constantly on Marx's mind as he wrote the essays I have discussed. It so happened that around that time (1842 to

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March 1843), Marx was the editor of the *Rheinische Zeitung*, and he was offered the editorship because List, to whom it was offered first, refused it. List's 1841 book made headlines and was widely discussed in the papers. Marx, as we now know, had read it by 1843 and waged his own private polemic against it (Szporluk 1988, 23). And List's book was the first authoritative formulation of economic nationalism.

List was 52 years old when he wrote his *magnum opus*, and approaching the end of a life-long career of nationalistic agitation. It started with his advocacy, early on, of the establishment of a German national parliament, army, and judiciary, as well as cultural institutions, which obviously went against the interests of the rulers of the 38 independent states united at that time in a loose German Confederation. He also agitated against the customs barriers separating these states, and in 1819 became the Chairman of the Association of German Merchants and Manufacturers, founded in Frankfurt to abolish internal tariffs and establish a "universal German system [based] on the principle of retaliation against foreign states" (Szporluk 1988, 104). From the point of view of the powers that be, this was a serious transgression, and when List was elected representative from Reutlingen to the Würtemberg National Assembly, his election "was canceled by Ministerial veto" (Nicholson 1922, xxx).

Forced into exile shortly thereafter, List spent much of his adult life as an expatriate, finding a home away from home in the United States, of which he became a citizen. He was welcomed there by another expatriate, the great French nationalist Lafayette, who introduced his German confrere to some influential Americans then quite agitated about English economic superiority. These Americans, in turn, invited List to express himself on the subject of the unfairness of Great Britain's trade policies, which he did. His opinions were eventually published as a collection of letters by the Pennsylvania Association for the Promotion of Manufacturing Industry. In these letters List attacked Adam Smith, advocated protectionist policies, and praised the so-called "American system" (moving a defender of free trade in the House of Representatives to remark: "We appear to have imported a Professor from Germany, in absolute violation of the American system, to lecture upon its lessons" [quoted in Szporluk 1988, 110]). This defense of American economic interests against England earned List the gratitude of his American friends and, as it was known that Germany was foremost

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on his mind, they secured for him a consular appointment which, after a while, allowed him to return to his Fatherland.

List completed the first part of *The National System of Political Economy* in Augsburg. The book was immediately attacked for its exclusive preoccupation with German interests, but went through three editions in several months, as well as appearing in French and Hungarian translations. In the last part of the work, entitled "Politics" (1844), List, in addition to inveighing against the "crafty and spiteful commercial policy of England," and arguing for the development of all-German communications, proposed the adoption of a common German flag, the establishment of German colonies overseas, and a national emigration policy. His views now found a receptive audience and he was greatly admired. But his spirit was broken by 24 years of frustration, and in 1846 List committed suicide.

Upon his death, List's life and writings became the stuff of mythogenesis. As a result, one is more likely to read about List than to read List himself—and more likely to be misinformed than informed about List's ideas.

These ideas were rather uncomplicated. Unlike Marx—who, as behooves a true Romantic, lived in and wrote about a world entirely of his imagination, and was (*par excellence*) a theorist in that proud sense of the word which emphasized the independence of theory from the messiness of fact—List lived in the real world and was a man of practice. For lack of alternative and perhaps by inclination far more engrossed than Marx in the quotidian business of earning a living, List was not a philosophical materialist and did not believe economics to be the end-all of human endeavor. Consequently, on the face of it, at least, his deviation from (and contribution to) the Romantic nationalist outlook was far less radical than Marx's.

Like all Romantic nationalists, List believed that the world was naturally divided into nations, and that nations, rather than individual human beings, were the real (that is significant) actors in history. Both the individual human beings and humanity as a whole depended on nations and could only find realization through them. The nations were hierarchically ranked and could be divided into important and unimportant in accordance, fundamentally, with the level of their cultural development and potential, in turn determined by nature; in List's opinion, they were ultimately defined by climate. Nations of the so-called "temperate zone," which corre-

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sponded to Europe and North America, he believed, were inherently superior to the nations of the area he termed "torrid," and, as a result, were justified in attempting to use the resources of these latter in the service of their own national self-fulfillment. Individual members of the nation could also be legitimately used for this purpose: the interests of individuals did not necessarily combine into the interests of the nation and, under all circumstances, the former were subservient to the latter. The root interest of every nation was the interest in national self-realization. Self-realization could be obstructed by the efforts or lack of cooperation of other nations, each set on its independent course by the same desire to realize itself. This presupposed a state of permanent international competition. (Karl Schmitt gave this view an authoritative formulation in political theory and, having no use for either euphemisms or over-fine distinctions, called international competition "war.")

In general, this position was quite orthodox. But while Marx presented the competition between nations in terms of a universal economic struggle (leaving it exactly what it was), with List, while still presented as competition between nations, it acquired an economic dimension. List's ideas, therefore, provided an alternative outlet for nationalist energies, channelling them into economic pursuits with eventually dramatic effects; nationalists of Marxist persuasion, in contrast, if they remained true Marxists, dissipated their energies in complacent contemplation of history.

Like Marx, List thought Germany compared unfavorably with some other European nations. The main reason for such unfavorable comparison, in his view, however, was the underdevelopment of its industry, and for that reason he saw as his nation's chief rivals not only England and France, but also Holland. Still, England was at the center of his attention: it was by far the greatest economic power of the time, and List thought that Germany's economic inferiority could be in large measure attributed to England's imposition on its partners of the policy of free trade—which, under the conditions which then prevailed, served to maintain England in the position of unrivaled exporter of manufactured goods. List, therefore, concentrated his efforts on trying to convince his countrymen of the benefits of protective tariffs against English imports. List was not opposed to freedom of trade in principle and did not have a principled commitment to protective tariffs, but he was of the opinion that, circumstances being what they were, freedom of for-

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eign trade was bad for Germany and protective tariffs were in its interest. Arguing for protection against foreign industrial imports, he at the same time insisted on the necessity of abolishing all the tariffs within Germany and praised the benefits of internal free competition for the development of the economy. That such competition could prove deleterious to individuals and large groups (such as the industrial proletariat) within Germany, and that the ability to buy foreign goods cheaply meant greater comfort for large numbers of Germans, appeared to him irrelevant. "The nation must sacrifice and give up a measure of material prosperity in order to gain culture, skill, and powers of united production," he advised (List 1922, 117). He was at no point concerned with the prosperity of his fellow men, but instead was devoted singlemindedly to the ideal of a powerful and prestigious Germany. In a similar vein, Marx defended free trade, knowing full well that under it "the whole severity of the laws of political economy will be applied to the working classes. . . . All economic laws, with their most astounding contradictions will act upon a larger scale, upon a greater extent of territory of the whole earth." Marx supported the policy exactly because of that, for "from the uniting of all these contradictions into a single group [would] result the struggle which [would] . . . eventuate in the emancipation of the proletarians" (Engels, quoted in Szporluk 1988, 40–41). He put this bluntly on another occasion: "Generally speaking, the Protective system in these days is conservative, while the Free Trade system works destructively [and is, therefore, progressive?]. It breaks up old nationalities and carries antagonisms of proletariat and bourgeoisie to the uttermost point. In a word, Free Trade hastens the Social Revolution" (Marx, quoted in Szporluk 1988, 41).

For List, the development of the national economy was not an end in itself, but only a crucially important means towards the achievement of a far higher goal: making Germany powerful and securing for it a place in the international community, commensurate with its cultural achievement and potential—a cultural or, at most, political, rather than economic, ideal. Vigorous industry, in his view, was "a tonic for the national spirit"; without it Germans would be unable "to soar to national greatness" (List 1981, 183–84). Not only did a powerful economy imply superior conditions for political and cultural development, but it was indispensable as a condition for national prestige. Inattention to questions of econ-

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omy was perilous: to say nothing of their inferiority vis-à-vis England, it could leave Germans "far behind the French and North Americans, nay: far behind the Russians" (List 1922, 156)—a state of obvious degradation, the prospect of which would frighten any patriot out of his wits.

Because so much depended on it, the development of the national economy was too important a project to entrust to the invisible hand operating through individual economic interests. The economic interests of merchants aroused List's particular suspicion: he thought them inherently deficient in patriotic spirit, ready to pursue their selfish ends "at the expense of the nation's productive powers, and indeed of its independence," and for that very reason enamored, together with "robbers, cheats, and thieves," of the principle "Laissez faire, laissez passer" (List 1922, 208). Merchants however, were in his view less important to the national economy than "producers," that is, presumably, entrepreneurs and managers engaged in manufacturing industry, but also all those who contributed to the nation's "productive power" or its "power of producing wealth" (we would refer to it today as "human capital") through education, administration, and planning, as well as through generally raising its cultural and intellectual level. In fact, he believed "the mental labors of those who maintain laws and order, and cultivate and promote instruction, religion, science, and art" (ibid., 111) to be among the primary causes of wealth; "instructors of youth and of adults, virtuosos, musicians, physicians, judges, and administrators [were] productive in a much higher degree" (ibid., 116), and were thus more important for the nation's business, than businessmen as such. But in the case of "producers" too, List was convinced that "only where the interest of individuals has been subordinated to those of the nation . . . the nations have been brought to harmonious development of their productive powers" (ibid., 132). This made the national economy the business of the state, and the involvement of the state provided ample opportunities for the participation of far-sighted patriotic intellectuals.

It may be worthwhile to pause for a moment here and point out that every single element of List's approach to national economy—the subordination of individual interests to those of the community; the subordination of the economy to politics, and the investment of the supreme power of economic decision-making in the state; the relative preference for protective tariffs in foreign trade re-

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lations, and the unconditional advocacy of free competition at home; the distinction between "productive" capital and capital generated in trade and finance, and unequivocal preference for the former—finds reflection in the economic attitudes and policies of fascist states. (This is particularly evident if one considers the paradigmatic Italian case.)[8] But where some would perceive the kinship with fascism, others notice more diverse affinities. Joseph Finkelstein and Alfred L. Thimm (1981, 118–19), for example, believe it is "easy to think of List as being very much at home among supporters of the early New Deal or with any stretch of the imagination in the coterie of followers of President Johnson's Great Society," while according to Bert F. Hoselitz (1960, 196), "List's work resembles much of the present literature on economic growth, which is also elaborated with the aim of providing guidelines for planned economic development." List's popularity is clearly on the increase today in America, where he has been newly discovered by authors writing on business matters for a general audience.[9] Interestingly, his fame appears to have reached us by a somewhat roundabout route: we are willing to pay attention to his ideas because they have been taken seriously in Japan.

One of the features which make List's approach to economics appealing is its intellectual indeterminism and, therefore, activism. The economic dimension was, obviously, very important for him as a basis for cultural and political development, but it was, clearly, not the *Unterbau* of social existence it was for Marx, and it was, in its turn, dependent on cultural and political processes. List remained open in regard to the question "whether the material forces exert a greater influence over moral forces, or whether the moral outweigh the material in their operation; whether the social forces act upon the individual forces the more powerfully, or whether the latter upon the former." His view of social causality was multidirectional, admitting and accepting "this much [as] certain[:] that between the two there subsists an interchanging sequence of action and reaction, with the result that the increase of one set of forces promotes the increase of the other, and that the enfeeblement of the one ever involves the enfeeblement of the other" (List 1922, 40). The economic and non-economic factors were interdependent. This implied the importance of people's commitments and gave one the possibility of, even required, active participation (with its accompanying responsibilities and potential sense of accomplishment) in the

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social process. The appeal of List's ideas has been at its strongest in times when the laws of history or the invisible hand failed to bring the desired results unaided and people grew impatient with them. It is this impatience which drew so many European intellectuals in the 1920s and 1930s from Marxist socialism to fascism, and which might have been the reason behind the attraction of fascists to List.[10]

List vs. Smith

Friedrich List has been called "the first major critic" of Adam Smith (by Szporluk), his "intellectual opposite" (by De Cecco), and the author of "the first amendment" to Smith's doctrine (by Shanin) (Szporluk 1988, 147, 150). These epithets may create an impression that List engaged in a dialogue with Smith's writings, and was able to improve upon or develop in some ways Smith's understanding of economic behavior, which he did not. List was not interested in understanding economic behavior as such; he was not a theorist, but a propagandist of a certain course of action. His project was as different as could be from the disinterested work of intellectual analysis in which Smith engaged, and this made dialogue (unless we define "dialogue" as "two people talking to themselves") impossible. *The Wealth of Nations* represented the most important point of reference in List's thought, but List's Adam Smith was a straw man, a symbol of the situation List found offensive and the way of thinking he opposed, and Smith's ideas, as discussed in *The National System of Political Economy*, were so badly misrepresented that the author of the introduction to the 1922 English edition had reason to wonder whether List had read Smith himself, or had only "taken for granted the *Smithianismus* bandied about in popular pamphlets" (Nicholson 1922, xiv).

With that imaginary Adam Smith, List found two somewhat contradictory faults. On the one hand, he accused Smith of irrelevance because Smith disregarded nationality. For instance, he wrote that Smith

> concerned himself . . . little . . . with true political economy, i.e. that policy which each separate nation had to obey in order to make progress in its economic conditions. He entitles his work, *The Nature*

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> *and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (i.e. of all nations of the whole human race). He speaks of the various systems of political economy in a separate part of his work solely for the purpose of demonstrating their non-efficiency, and of proving that "political" or *national* economy must be replaced by "cosmopolitical or world-wide economy." (List 1922, 97–8)

"The system of the school," in List's opinion, suffered

> from three main defects: firstly, from boundless *cosmopolitanism*, which neither recognizes the principle of nationality, nor takes into consideration the satisfaction of its interests; secondly, from a dead *materialism*, which everywhere regards chiefly the mere exchangeable value of things without taking into consideration the mental and political, the present and the future interests, and the productive powers of the nation; thirdly, from *a disorganizing particularism* and *individualism*, which, ignoring the nature and character of social labour and the operation of the union of powers in their higher consequences, considers private industry only as it would develop itself under a state of free interchange with society (i.e. with the whole human race) were that race not divided into separate national societies. Between each individual and entire humanity, however, stands the NATION, with its special language and literature. (Ibid., 141)

Smith, List argued, nullified "nationality and . . . State power [and exalted] individualism to the position of author of all effective power." He conceived of a nation merely as "a community, i.e. a number of individuals dwelling together [who] know best for themselves what branches of occupation are most to their advantage, and . . . can best select for themselves the means which promote their prosperity" (List 1922, 278). This, List insisted, was "nothing more than . . . a mere shopkeeper's . . . theory—not a scientific doctrine showing how the productive powers of an entire nation can be called into existence, increased, maintained, and preserved—for the special benefit of its civilization, welfare, might, continuance, and independence. [It regarded] everything from the shopkeeper's point of view" (ibid., 279).

On the other hand, List claimed that Smith's theory of free trade served the interests of English industry, maintaining its near-monopoly on the market and keeping other nations at a competitive disadvantage. Smith's cosmopolitanism, in other words, was a subterfuge (an "ideology" in Marxist terms), and a tool of English na-

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tionalism. The results of the operation of free trade under the existing political conditions, List thought, were predictable. "The Britons," he wrote,

> as an independent and separate nation would henceforth take their national interest as the sole guide of their policy. The Englishman, from predilection for his language, for his laws, regulations, and habits, would whenever it was possible devote his powers and his capital to develop his own native industry, for which the system of free trade, by extending the market for English manufactures over all countries, would offer him sufficient opportunity; he would not readily take a fancy to establish manufactures in France or Germany. All excess of capital in England would be at once devoted to trading with foreign parts of the world. If the Englishman took it into his head to emigrate, or to invest his capital elsewhere than in England, he would as he now does prefer those more distant countries where he would find already existing his language, his laws, his regulations, rather than the benighted countries of the Continent. All England would thus be developed into one immense manufacturing city. Asia, Africa, and Australia would be civilized by England, and covered with new states modelled after the English fashion. In time a world of English states would be formed, under the presidency of the mother state, in which the European Continental nations would be lost as unimportant, unproductive races. By this arrangement it would fall to the lot of France, together with Spain and Portugal, to supply this English world with the choicest wines, and to drink the bad ones herself: at most France might retain the manufacture of a little millinery. Germany would scarcely have more to supply this English world with than children's toys, wooden clocks, and philological writings, and sometimes also an auxiliary corps, who might sacrifice themselves to pine away in the deserts of Asia or Africa, for the sake of extending the manufacturing and commercial supremacy, the literature and language of England. It would not require many centuries before people of this English world would think and speak of the Germans and French in the same tone as we speak at present of Asiatic nations. (1922, 106–7)

"True political science," List concluded, "regards such a result of universal free trade as a very unnatural one; it will argue that had universal free trade been introduced at the time of the Hanseatic League, the German nationality instead of the English would have secured an advance in commerce and manufacture over all other

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countries. It would be most unjust, [therefore,] even on cosmopolitical grounds, now to resign to the English all the wealth and power of the earth" (ibid. 106–7).

However profound List's misinterpretation of Smith, it is clear that *The Wealth of Nations* was a major source of inspiration for List's own thinking. If the assertion that the economism of Marx emerged largely as a reaction to List's economic nationalism is arguable, it is beyond the shadow of a doubt that List's economic nationalism was to a very significant extent provoked by his reading of Adam Smith. And since the latter was also a central point of reference for Marx, we may conclude that the springs of the economistic view of society, which exerts such a profound influence on our lives today by elevating the economic sphere to the very center of our social concerns, are to be sought in eighteenth-century Britain. What were they?

To begin with, I would like to analyze Smith's own position on the matter. Smith—as is well known, but systematically forgotten—was not an economist. He was what was then called "a moral philosopher." Neither was he an econom*ist* with an emphasis on the last syllable: in his philosophy, the economic sphere did not occupy the paramount place it held, for example, for Marx. In his first great book, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, which was the cornerstone of his system, Smith was preoccupied with issues fundamental to the modern discipline of sociology: the constitution of society, the problem of social integration or, as it is often called, the problem of order—the all-important question of how separate individuals come to transcend themselves and constitute aggregate entities which give the impression of unity, and how they develop moral, that is, social sentiments (those that contribute to social integration).

Smith's basic argument was that human beings were by nature predisposed to form hierarchical and cohesive social structures, because they were driven in life by a desire for social approbation which expressed itself in the willingness to submit to norms of propriety, and in relentless status-seeking. This desire was essentially of a spiritual (non-material) nature, and material self-interest was entirely subordinated to it. Social order was based on a systematic sacrifice of material advantage to propriety (or social convention). Status—the respect of others—rather than greed or will to power, was the primary mover of history. "Place," wrote Smith,

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> that great object which divides the wives of aldermen, is the end of half the labors of human life; and is the cause of all the tumult and bustle, all the rapine and injustice, which avarice and ambition have introduced into this world. People of sense, it is said, indeed despise place; that is they despise sitting at the head of the table, and are indifferent who it is that is pointed out to the company by that frivolous circumstance, which the smallest advantage is capable of overbalancing. But rank, distinction, pre-eminence, no man despises, unless he is either raised very much above, or sunk very much below, the ordinary standard of human nature; unless he is either so confirmed in wisdom and real philosophy, as to be satisfied that, while the propriety of his conduct renders him the just object of approbation, it is of little consequence though he be neither attended to, nor approved of; or so habituated to the idea of his own meanness, so sunk in slothful and sottish indifference, as entirely to have forgot the desire, and almost the very wish, for superiority. (Smith 1982, 57)

The faculty underneath the desire for social approbation, the mechanism through which it operated, was "sympathy": our ability to identify with the situation of another, to put oneself into another's shoes. It is through sympathy that we are able to perceive how others judge our actions; through sympathy we construct a composite image of the other, who becomes our constant companion, a "man within [our] breast" who keeps a tireless watch over our conduct. "Sympathy" makes us amenable to socialization; only because of it are we able to receive guidance. Being at the center of attention—eminence (or, again, status)—thus, is an innermost need of human nature, and obscurity the darkest misfortune, far more debilitating than poverty: it connotes that truly benighted state in which one is deprived of guidance, and, being unable to form a notion of the judgment of others, because nobody cares to judge one's actions, is doomed to vegetate on the periphery of social integration and morality, leading only a marginally human existence.

"Two different roads," suggested Smith, lead "to the attainment of this so much desired object [to deserve, to acquire, and to enjoy the respect and admiration of mankind]; the one, by the study of wisdom and the practice of virtue; the other by the acquisition of wealth and greatness." Moreover, "the great mob of mankind" are "the admirers and worshippers," and at that, "the disinterested admirers and worshippers," of the latter road (Smith 1982, 62). For

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this reason, in the context of the problem of order, it becomes helpful to explore the dynamics underlying the pursuit of wealth.

In the concluding paragraph of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith announced his intention to undertake such a study as one of the several projects related to his central theme. He wanted, he said, "in another discourse [to] endeavour to give an account of the general principles of law and government" (by which he meant "the general principles which ought to run through and be the foundation of the laws of all nations"), "and of the different revolutions they have undergone in the different ages and periods of society, not only in what concerns justice, but in what concerns police, revenue, and arms, and whatever else is the object of law" (1982, 342). That he regarded his magisterial *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* as a partial fulfillment of this intention, and thus as a contribution to the larger project of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, is indicated in the author's "Advertisement" of the sixth edition of the latter work, published in 1790, where he referred to its last sentence and wrote: "In the *Enquiry concerning the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, I have partly executed [my] promise, at least so far as concerns police, revenue, and arms."

When this is taken into consideration, it becomes clear that Smith would not want to be held responsible for the birth of modern economics: he simply could not have conceived such a child. He would have seen it as an unnatural and pitifully crippled creature, emerging out of the brain of her progenitor in the manner of Athena springing out of Zeus's head, but, unlike that other goddess, taken out forcibly and piecemeal, with its head—*The Theory of Moral Sentiments*—thrown out as useless, and no legs to stand on, since Smith did not have the chance to complete his creation. It would be all stomach, and its imagination would be limited to the digestive process; it would indeed be a discipline driven to conclude that man is what he eats. In other words, if Adam Smith is to be credited with the birth of economics, we have to regard it, from his point of view, as a result of a misunderstanding and thus an unfortunate accident; had he been able to carry his offspring to term, economics would be a part of sociology.

Given that *The Wealth of Nations* was but a giant and brilliant appendix, one of a series of intended appendices, to *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, its interpretation out of this context was bound to be a misinterpretation. Nevertheless, we may still ask how well List

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understood *The Wealth of Nations* in its own terms, as a set of independent propositions. We may also ask why he—and the world—focused so exclusively on this second and less important work of the Glasgow philosopher.

As we know, List made two sets of accusations against Smith's economic theory: he accused Smith of disregarding nationality; and he claimed that Smith's propositions, under the pretense of cosmopolitanism, served British national commercial interests. The first indictment was dead wrong. Smith's thought was suffused with appreciation of the idea of the nation, inspired with nationalism, and none of his statements, beginning with the title *The Wealth of Nations* itself, can be properly understood outside the framework of English (which in the eighteenth century meant British) national consciousness.

It is important to keep in mind that in 1776 there were very few nations in the world. There was one for certain—it was England; two more were about to emerge—the United States and France; one case—the Netherlands—was debatable.[11] In the Germanies at the time, the idea of the nation was regarded as "a political monstrosity" (Nicolai, quoted in Greenfeld 1992, 314). The fact that Smith wrote of the wealth of *nations*, when most of his contemporaries recognized none but dynastic realms, private individuals, and humanity, is eloquent proof of the salience of nationality in his mind and evidence that he saw the world through its prism.

The definition of a society as a nation implied a radical transformation of social consciousness, nothing less than a conceptual revolution. It presupposed the image of an inclusive, sovereign, and in essence egalitarian community, which stood in sharp contrast to the hierarchical and compartmentalized image of the feudal society of orders in which nationalism first arose. Two principles lay at the root of the nationalist image. One was that the people, including the lower classes, were sovereign, with the implication that all authority was delegated and representative; the other was that all the members of the nation were fundamentally equal to each other. This image emerged in England in the early sixteenth century and was closely related to the idea of man as a rational being. It was as such that man was created in the image of God, and it was because men were created in the image of God that they were equal to each other in the most significant aspect of their being and, as a result, free, capable of self-government, and therefore capable of participa-

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tion in the government of their community. The community of such rational, equal, and free men was a nation by definition.

The English concept of the nation, therefore, originally referred to a composite entity, the essence of which inhered in the nature of its elements—the individuals. In the English, as well as the American English, of the eighteenth century, the word "nation" (similarly to other related terms) was a plural; it corresponded to plural pronouns such as "we" and "they," not to the singular "it" or "she." Thus, when List berated Smith for seeing no nations, but "merely" numbers of individuals dwelling together, he was wrong and right at the same time. The existence of nations was obvious for Smith, but the nation was defined as individuals—rational, equal, and free—dwelling together.

The recognition that Smith's consciousness, his way of thinking, was national consciousness, and English national consciousness at that, allows a deeper understanding of his reasoning in both *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and *The Wealth of Nations*. Nationality was not a corrective or an addition to his vision of society, or even its central element; it was the very framework of this vision. Smith's sociological imagination was limited by the image of society that was defined as a nation, in the sense in which the latter was understood in England. This type of society—a new species of social life, really, as yet unfamiliar anywhere but where Smith lived—was the one he knew, and he considered it ordinary and natural. Seeing the world through the prism of his experience—that is, of nationality—he was not able to appreciate, and to conceive of deep reasons for, variation among societies. So unquestioning was his acceptance of nations, so thorough the penetration of the idea in the British soil, that he simply could not imagine societies that were not nations, and, needless to say, it did not occur to him that nationality could be a product of cultural construction. For Smith, all societies were open societies that allowed social mobility; the dynamics of ambition and envy on which he focused in his first book, and of supply and demand which formed the lasting contribution of the second, were both expressions of this central structural feature. Thinking them universal, Smith looked for universal psychological regularities to explain them.

But social mobility was, *par excellence*, the feature of *nations*, perhaps the most consequential expression of *nationalism* in social structure. Smith presumed a uniformity in the most significant cul-

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tural element of societies—the ways in which they defined their identities—and for that reason he was able to analyze social and economic processes as if they went on in a cultural vacuum. Ironically, this inattention to culture was culturally determined: it was a consequence of Smith's untroubled national consciousness.

Wealth and Nationalism

List's interpretation of *The Wealth of Nations*, therefore, was doubly incorrect, but the popularity of Smith's book had anyhow less to do with what it actually offered then with what its readers believed to have found in it. And what they believed they found was a way to account for one of the most startling and incomprehensible phenomena of the age—the tantalizing spectacle of the British economy, its salience in the British society, its sheer grandeur, its evident political and military implications, and its unquestionable contribution to British national prestige. In the history of European civilization there had never before been a society in which the economy enjoyed such superior status, or whose status among others was so obviously and profoundly affected by the glowing state of its economy. For the first time in this history, therefore, an economy—the British economy—became the focus of envy and admiration. What was its secret?

The Wealth of Nations, so aptly titled and coming, as it were, from the horse's mouth, seemed to provide an answer: the secret was in free competition. Of course, even apart from the fact that freedom of competition was necessarily a relative concept, one still had to explain why competition in Britain was in some respects freer than in other countries. But, overjoyed with their discovery, the converts to *Smithianismus* did not ponder this question. Had they done so, they might have stumbled upon the idea I will now propose: namely, that the British economic miracle was just another consequence of English nationalism.

The effect of nationalism on the economy in England was prodigious, for it was the redefinition of the English society as a nation which allowed the economy's emergence from its traditionally subordinate position in relation to political and religious institutions, and its establishment—or institutionalization—at the top of the value hierarchy. The argument I am making is essentially similar to

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Weber's argument in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, and, so far as historical evidence is concerned, appears to be preferable to it. The redefinition of the English society as a nation, which implied the fundamental equality of all Englishmen, freed economic occupations, specifically those oriented to the pursuit of profit, from the stigma attached to them in traditional Christian thinking. Birth declined in importance as the basis of status, and occupational prestige became, in a large measure, a function of expected service to the common good of the nation.

Since the nation was defined as a composite entity, it had no will but that composed of the wills of its members and no interests beyond their interests. The common good, therefore, was the greatest good of the greatest number. Obviously, this was originally mostly a matter of theory, because nobody cared to ask what exactly the greatest number considered their good. But the growing respect for the common man, implied in the idea of the nation, was necessarily reflected in greater attention to the needs of the population at large. This spurred economic activity, and both the resulting prosperity and economic growth were included among the distinguishing characteristics of the English nation. To be prosperous and usefully employed became a matter of patriotic duty, adding a certain spiritual satisfaction to the material comforts of the former and compensating for certain unavoidable disadvantages of the latter. The contribution of commerce and industry, in particular, to England's military might and prestige further reinforced this trend, making profitable and useful trades highly respectable and bestowing on the economy that social approbation which alone would enable it to attract talent. "Merchant" was a term of derision in much of Christian Europe (it has remained so in Russia, for example, until today); in England it was an honorable title, and commerce was an occupation of choice for many able and well-positioned people, who could have, and in the France or Germany of the time would have, done something else with their abilities. In England, gaining wealth went hand in hand with gaining status, and men who were animated by the desire for rank and eminence, as Smith so perceptively noted, were content to satisfy it by way of making themselves rich, thereby turning wealth into a foundation of status.

It was, of course, this quite exceptional circumstance which motivated Smith to turn his attention to the wealth of nations as he was examining the stratagems people employed in their insatiable

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search for honors. As they climbed the ladder of success, these Englishmen, empowered by their proud nationalism, accomplished several things. They made their economy boom and started the Industrial Revolution; they made their country the envy of the world and provoked wave after wave of reactive nationalisms, among others economic, thereby leading other countries to focus on their economies; and they purged filthy lucre of its filth—making it worth striving for for reasons that had nothing to do with greed—by stressing the altruistic element in material self-interest, and elevating the economy to the place of honor it holds in our collective imagination today.

To get from there to the conclusion that economic success (the acquisition of wealth) was not just important and honorable, but the very basis of social felicity and historical development itself, one needed to suspend logical reasoning but for a brief moment. It is no wonder that this leap of logic went largely unnoticed. Neither Smith nor List, it should be acknowledged, made it, although List thought that Smith did. They were credited with leading the way nonetheless. List was right to claim that Smith's theory, particularly regarding free trade, served British commercial interests, even if this happened by pure coincidence and not as a result of conspiracy. Because of this coincidence, Smith's analytical propositions were understood as immutable laws and even moral principles. In England and later in America (perhaps especially in America), they became national values, the commitment to which could stand in the way of common sense and, at times, imperil obvious national interests. List, in his life-long battle with this misunderstanding of Smith (which he took for Smith's theory), questioned the immutability and morality of economic policies. Ironically, the policies he proposed instead were in a different context interpreted as immutable laws and moral principles.

In terms of dollars and cents, in terms of the economic growth and wealth generated by nationalism, nations do indeed appear to be worth quite a lot. To begin with, nationalism is the inspiration behind the three major trends in popular economic thinking: *Smithianismus*, economic nationalism, and Marxism. Since popular economic theory is exactly the theory that directly affects economic policy, it is only reasonable to suggest that our economic policies are informed by nationalism, too. Insofar as Adam Smith is credited with founding the discipline of modern economics, na-

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tionalism, which suffused Smith's thought, should be seen as, to some extent, an explanation of the emergence of economics. Perhaps most importantly, nationalism lies at the root of that immense transformation in the social position of the economy, without which neither the Industrial Revolution nor much of the economic development since then would be conceivable, and by which all of the above theories were in some way conditioned. If we stopped the discussion of the economic worth of nationalism right here, we would have already said quite a lot. But all this is just the tip of the iceberg.

NOTES

1. This position is expressed authoritatively in Gellner 1983 and Hobsbawm 1990.
2. For a recent discussion of Berger's idea of "economic culture" see Berger 1994, 97-110.
3. A brief discussion of premodern scorn for economic activities may be found in Hirschman 1977. The subject of his book is exactly the shift of attitudes resulting in the positive reevaluation of the economy, which is the focus of the present paper. Hirschman traces this shift in the thought of moral and political philosophers from the Renaissance (presumably, beginning with the Trecento?) to the late eighteenth century, quoting generously from French and especially English seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sources. But he does not provide an explanation of why this shift occurred or why the complex arguments of a few elite intellectuals were able to exert such a profound influence on the life of the society at large.
4. On the significance of List's ideas for Marx see Szporluk 1988.
5. It first appeared in Russian, but later was brought to the attention of Western readers and exhaustively analyzed in the original, fascinating, but problematic interpretation of Marx and List by Roman Szporluk (1988). Szporluk's argument is predicated on the absolute comparability of communism and nationalism, which he sees as two rival ideological responses to capitalism and its ideological representative, the laissez-faire doctrine of modern economics. Communism is equated with Marxism, and nationalism is represented as the thought of Friedrich List, Listism. This narrows nationalism beyond recognition and dramatically reduces both its significance and the significance of the discussion. The book becomes simply a comparison between the thought of Karl Marx and that of his less well-known compatriot, but this comparison is inadequate if considered outside the framework of nationalism broadly defined. Communism and nationalism are not comparable entities to begin with; comparing them is akin to comparing Christianity with monotheism. Monotheism is a type of reli-

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gion, which can take the form of many specific religions; Christianity is one form of monotheism. Similarly, nationalism is a type of secular social and political imagination, which can find expression in numerous specific ideologies; Communism, in distinction, is a specific ideology—and as I shall argue in this paper (and have already argued on other occasions), it is, indeed, one specific form of nationalism.

6. See the discussion in Greenfeld 1985 and Greenfeld 1992, 378–95.
7. The opinion of the "early Romantics" of Friedrich Schlegel's circle, as expressed in the *Athenaeum* Fragment # 216.
8. On the economic aspect of fascism see Sternhell 1994.
9. See, for example, Kuttner 1991, McCraw 1992, and Reich 1991.
10. Regarding the attraction of Marxists to fascism see Sternhell 1994 and, particularly, Talmon, 1991. Also see Greenfeld 1993 for a review of the latter.
11. See Greenfeld 1992.

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Fred Carstensen

CIVIL AUTHORITY AND THE ARTICULATION OF MARKETS

Markets, law, and regulation are intimately intertwined. Thus, recent studies (by Morton Keller and Donald McCloskey et al.) of the intersection between public policy and the economy are both necessary and welcome. But the absence in these works of a nuanced conceptualization of the critical, constructive role of civil authority in the creation and maintenance of open, competitive markets, and the virtual absence of a concern for and understanding of the engines of real economic growth, results in scholarship that only weakly articulates the profound linkage between civil authority, open markets, and economic growth.

Contemporary American political debate seems to have lost all sense of what (if any) positive functions government might have—save, perhaps, putting more police on the street and more guards in our rapidly expanding penal institutions. Wherever possible, we are urged to let "the market" decide what goods to produce and what services to offer, and are led to believe that every contraction of government—whether of expenditure or of regulation—will necessarily expand the range of choice for economic units, whether individuals, families, or firms. Thus, the debate is framed as one in which the range of individual discretion and the realm of civil authority occupy some fixed space, the two arenas being inherently

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dichotomous and their intersection, at best, a zero-sum game. Such a view finds confirmation in the comparative statics that lies at the core of neoclassical economic analysis, and easily reduces government "intervention" to rent-seeking behavior which has, and can have, no productive impact. Such a conceptualization is easily grasped, offers a seductively appealing calculus, and finds quick confirmation in the myriad instances where public power has been used to benefit clearly private ends; it is also profoundly misleading. Historically, the defining characteristic of the American economy has been neither equilibrium nor stasis, but sustained, long-term growth; and civil authority has played a critical role in creating, shaping, and sustaining the competitive frameworks that gave rise to intense competition and, through expanding markets, specialization—the twin sources of those Schumpeterian innovations that generate economic growth. Indeed, it is hard to envision how markets more sophisticated than primitive, direct commodity barter can exist absent some system of law—that is, civil authority. Yet, as the two books considered here suggest, neither historians nor economists have yet articulated a persuasive, nuanced framework within which to understand and evaluate the interdependent, interactive evolution and consequences of public policy and economic growth.

The noted historian Morton Keller has undertaken, as a sequel to his *Affairs of State* (1977), a sweeping three-volume study of American public life in the first third of the twentieth century, under the collective title of *Persistence and Pluralism: Public Life in Early Twentieth Century America.*[1] In the first volume, *Regulating a New Economy: Public Policy and Economic Change in America, 1900-1933* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), Keller portrays this "new economy" as one defined by the rise of big business, massive technological change, and a broad shift from an economy based on the production of capital goods to one focused on consumer goods. Such shifts created a host of pressures—economic and political—for regulatory responses at the local, state, and federal levels, pressures articulated through legislation, administrative rule-making, and judicial proceedings.

In eight tightly packed chapters, Keller surveys a remarkable array of these regulatory responses. Two chapters summarize the efforts to cope with trusts and utilities, that is, with concentrations of economic power, which have the capacity to undermine or destroy competitive markets. Then Keller offers a revealing chapter on the

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early efforts to deal with the consequences of new technologies—trucks and buses, automobiles, airplanes, electricity, telephones, movies, radio. Such innovations unavoidably raise a significant array of issues, from fundamental questions of what property rights inhere in such technologies to how their use must be regulated and standardized, both to create a coherent market framework (e.g., rules governing wavelength, power, and other technical components of radio broadcasting) and to prevent excessive harms (e.g., rules of the road). Thus Keller includes a chapter on a potpourri of legal issues, from corporation law and occupational licensure to contracts and torts, in which he effectively conveys how business acted to shape such law, to a significant degree, to its own liking, although this law was not necessarily antithetical to the public interest and the maintenance of competitive markets. After treating the changing rules of patents, copyrights, trademarks, and advertising, which shape much market conduct (including prices, products, and sales), Keller considers how factors of production—land, labor, and capital—were regulated, and closes with a discussion of how rules shaped trade, finance, and taxation.

Keller is insistently empirical, piling up what is often a staggering array of detail. He acknowledges that his approach is "not so much an argument from theory as an argument from example" (6). His objective is to emphasize the broad continuity—the "persistence," in his vocabulary—of this period with the experiences of the nineteenth century, and to insist upon the "pluralism" of the American policy-making process, as revealed by the large number of actors and constituencies participating in policy formulation and implementation. Thus Keller is a revisionist vis-à-vis more recent scholarship, whether Marxist-influenced work such as that of Gabriel Kolko, Martin Sklar, and David Nobel, or the organizational hegemony arguments of Robert Wiebe and others. Keller contends that such views "unduly slight the persistence of the existing structure of politics, government, and law" (5) beyond the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era. He would thus push the temporal location of the genesis of the modern American state forward (again) to the years of the New Deal.

Yet even if one were to find Keller's methodology—simply heaping up illustration upon illustration—persuasive, neither his interpretative framework nor those of his adversaries offer a coherent understanding of why the continuing evolution and expansion of

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market activity raised so many challenges from roughly 1850 on. Before then, most American market exchange consisted of goods that were relatively easy to understand and evaluate and that were unlikely to inflict significant injury on the user (hence the logic of *caveat emptor*). Moreover, purchasers of goods usually knew the providers, a fact that constrained deficiencies (contrast the notorious itinerant Connecticut trader who sold fake nutmeg without effective constraint because of his anonymity). That is, market participants faced informational problems of neither complexity nor anonymity. Moreover, while, in this period, Americans were highly market responsive, they were often not market dependent: that is, they had the choice of not participating in market exchanges when the terms were unacceptable.[2] And, finally, where significant market power emerged, ease of entry quickly dissipated it.[3] Such conditions—full information and the absence of coercion—define the competitive market framework of mainstream neoclassical analysis.

These characteristics changed dramatically in the second half of the century. When efficient communication and transportation systems led to the emergence of a national market, people no longer knew the origin of goods. With the appearance of new products based on complex production technologies, such as canned salmon, bottled elixirs, and multistory urban tenements with gas (and, later, electrical) lighting and interior plumbing, people could no longer directly judge the quality of the products they acquired. And the injuries to which consumers were subject increased.[4] Food poisoning from faulty canning, the use of formaldehyde as a preservative in raw milk, the failure to standardize the size of risers on stairs or to provide bannisters and railings in tenements all imposed real harms; their presence raised challenges to firms that sought to provide these goods and threatened the capacity of individuals to rely on market transactions. Yet increasing economic specialization and urbanization prevented people from withdrawing from the market; they had to rely on it to meet their basic needs. And, for the first time, durable concentrations of economic power emerged, whether in regional railroads and grain elevators or in oil, sugar, cordage, and myriad other industrial trusts. Inadequate information and economic coercion, produced by complexity, anonymity, dependency, and concentrations of power, invited, if not demanded, public policy responses. Hence the explosion of regulation in food inspection and building codes at the state and local level from about 1870 was

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often, on its face, something more than mere unproductive public-sector job creation; by reducing information costs and power imbalances, such regulation provided (at least in theory) the assurances of minimum quality and reasonably open entry critical to the maintenance of competitive markets. Similarly, professional licensure—admittedly a rich field for rent-seeking behavior—appears to be a reasonable response to the need for minimum quality assurance in the face of the complexity of, for instance, modern medicine and electrical supply systems. Keller himself makes clear that much of such rule-making was in fact done at the behest of industry, often as a way of standardizing rules or working out adjudication procedures, sometimes to avoid the threat of Gresham's law. Because truly competitive markets rely upon systematic, standardized information, public policy can (again, in theory) open up markets by articulating and enforcing such standards.[5]

Beyond these considerations, Keller, unlike most others writing on this period, recognizes how the emergence of a host of new technologies—airplanes, cars, and radios most particularly—and the increasing importance of intangible contingent claims—e.g., stocks and bonds—were raising a host of new questions. Existing formulations of property rights could not comfortably encompass the production and use of the "goods" these technologies offered; the increasing complexity and interdependency of financial instruments and markets effectively overwhelmed the legal and institutional structure of the 1920s. Keller rightly emphasizes how these developments massively expanded the demand for policy responses, frequently formulated through judicial decisions that were later systematized and adjusted through statute.

Had Keller focused on the fundamental problems of creating and sustaining competitive markets, he could have placed his arguments about the role of persistence and pluralism in a systematic framework that, even while recognizing the rich opportunities for "rent-seeking" created by such problems, could emphasize how the actual performance of markets is intimately linked with the articulation of rules of ownership, conduct (private contract or public administrative rules), and recovery for injury (tort). It would also have underlined the motivation of those forces that opposed pluralism: national agencies, public and private, whose function was to standardize, simplify, coordinate, and integrate. Such forces—like the constitutionally mandated standardization of weights, measures,

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and monetary units—reduced information costs, encouraging market expansion and, therefore, according to Adam Smith, creating a context favorable to innovation. Indeed, the very "new economy" to which Keller argues public policy responded was characterized by its nationwide geographic scope, which is fundamentally inconsistent with the pluralist tendencies Keller highlights. In the absence of this analytical framework, he does not recognize the visible tension between the old frameworks that generated pluralist responses and the national economic pressures whose logic pointed to reliance on uniform federal standards, similar to the conflict in the 1990s between national political structures and economic pressures for transnational standards, e.g., in financial reporting.

Donald McCloskey's edited collection, *Second Thoughts: Myths and Morals of U.S. Economic History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), offers 24 brief—the longest is but nine pages—but mostly engaging and occasionally compelling essays that seek to examine "the past as a way of preparing for our future." In particular, the authors undertake to "show that commonly accepted wisdom about our economic past is often wrong, and therefore misleading" (3). Though written for a broad, lay audience, some of these essays are absolute gems, and should be required reading in the first instance for economists. Barry Eichengreen's "As Good as Gold—By What Standard?" ought to end the frequent and uninformed invocation of the virtues of the "classical gold standard"; he concludes "the gold standard was neither the normal way of organizing international monetary affairs prior to 1913, nor was it a guarantor of price and output stability." It did work well, but for a comparatively short time and only at the "international monetary system's European center"; its "record of output stability compares unfavorably with recent years" (87). Eichengreen reminds us powerfully that the monetary framework within which modern markets are embedded is inherently one established, maintained, and, yes, manipulated by public policy.

Similarly, Paul Uselding's "Does Government Intervention in the Economy Hurt Competitiveness—Or Help It?" makes a powerful case for the constructive role of federal leadership in the creation and dissemination of critical technologies, such as in agriculture, precision machining technology, and the computer industry:

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> In none of these examples referred to did the government seek to regulate or restrain the firms or individuals who sought to apply the benefits of government sponsored innovation. In the absence of such restraint, normal market incentives ensured the fullest economic development of each new product or process. . . . With the government acting in a facilitative and supportive fashion, as it has throughout most of our history, we would be better positioned to face the competitive challenge of the global economy. (166).

Additional essays by John Wallis on the era of the Great Depression, Richard Sylla on the critical role of appropriate banking regulation, Price Fishback on the perverse impact of workmen's compensation on accident rates and pay levels, Gary Libecap on the Teapot Dome scandal, and Jeff Williamson on the broad economic growth achieved by Third World economies (outside of Africa) also put the articulation of good law and good policy at the center of the analysis.

What is particularly refreshing about most of these essays is that they do not cast the analysis in terms of a rivalry between public power and private initiative. Rather, there is a clear understanding that public power, properly formulated and applied, creates and expands the arena for private initiative. Thus the analysis presumes, though it does not formally articulate, a Lockean positive-sum world, a context in which all can be better off. And the principal concern is to understand the processes of economic growth. This emerges explicitly in McCloskey's own wonderfully provocative and suggestive essay, "Competitiveness and the Antieconomics of Decline." The essays even suggest that our rhetoric should not be of "free" markets, but of "open" markets, because it is openness that engenders those competitive pressures that are the likeliest source for innovation and hence economic growth.

The promise of McCloskey's and these other essays is not, however, fulfilled by the volume as a whole. In a small way, the essays of Jonathan Hughes and Gary Walton suggest that the conceptual unity of many of the other essays was in some measure accidental. Hughes's "Do Americans Want Big Government?" is a predictable piece built on a caricature of history and a false dichotomy of government versus market, and it winds to a deeply pessimistic conclusion. Arguing in the Keller style of simply piling up examples of failed policies, Hughes gives government no constructive role in fa-

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cilitating growth and suggests that we have turned to it only for the purpose of redistribution: "we want outcomes that the free market will not produce on its own." But he then laments our failure to rely "entirely upon free contracting" (119), as if contract existed separate from civil authority. Gary Walton's "Fulton's Folly," though alert to the issue of economic growth, gets ensnared in a similar tension. Private interests (Fulton in this case) capture public power to create private monopoly; for this Walton criticizes government, though his evidence argues unambiguously that it was the initiative of private actors, not that of public employees, that lay at the heart of this effort. But then he concludes that "thanks to the U.S. Constitution" (150) such public sanction of monopoly has been thwarted—i.e., because of civil authority acting primarily through the courts.

In a larger way, the absence of a synthetic essay leaves readers to fend for themselves in identifying unifying themes and extracting current implications. It also reveals that neither book builds from a broad, self-conscious concern with providing a systematic framework for understanding the mechanisms of economic growth and the role of civil authority in the articulation and expansion of competitive markets which generate that growth. American economic history should at the very least make us cognizant of the remarkable reservoirs of creative talent that can be released by the proper environment. The purpose of civil authority, from this perspective, is to create a stable framework for the security of tangible and intangible property and of contract, within which individuals can develop reasonable expectations about the future and thus make rational calculations about the likely outcomes of various paths of economic conduct. The vitality of market activity lies precisely in such calculability, as Keller demonstrates in his discussion of the development of spatial property rights of radio transmission bands and the regulatory framework that permitted automobiles and trucks to share public space safely. A recent salient example of this process has been the creation of new property rights in pollution, specifically in atmospheric emissions. Creation of such a market enables for the first time a framework that will generate, it is reasonable to believe, coherent price information, and hence incentives, for assessing the tradeoffs between the market value of the pollution rights and the cost of buying or creating appropriate pollution reduction technology.

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Development of a nuanced understanding of the fundamental role of civil authority in its role of articulating market-creating and market-facilitating law and regulation would permit, even encourage, a coherent, systematic, logically consistent assessment of the regulatory responses Keller catalogues, and would create a shared framework and language for discussions of the sort McCloskey has collected. It might save much economic analysis from the misleadingly fixed dichotomous universe of government and market, shifting attention to how private initiative and public policy can jointly enlarge that universe.[6] Equally important, it could lead to a more focused and perceptive public discussion of the constructive roles civil authority plays in releasing through markets the creative capabilities of individuals and private organizations. We might then understand that markets are socially constructed arenas of interaction, created and sustained by the regulatory frameworks a society chooses to articulate. Recognition that the argument is thus never about the presence or absence of law, but always about the form and extent of regulation, might lead to a clear focus on the dynamic consequences of policy choices for future growth. Most importantly, it could lead to a pervasive recognition of the abiding role of civil authority in the maintenance of the most likely road to that growth: open markets.

NOTES

1. Volume two treats the realms of social policy—from "family, education, and religion" through crime, gender, and public health, to "immigration and citizenship"—and volume three examines "the structure of politics, government, and law that provided the setting for the public policy response to the emergence of modern America" (Keller, vii).
2. Most economic analysis fails to recognize that in the modern context market participants do not have the choice of "exit," of not participating. Tibor Scitovsky wrestled with this issue in his widely ignored but insightful and provocative *The Joyless Economy* (1976).
3. See for instance the arguments of Hurst (1956).
4. At least to some extent, the law came to accept the proposition that consumers were less able to "assume risk" in making purchasing decisions than workers could in accepting employment.
5. If one accepts that such standardization is valuable, there is no *ex ante* generic argument that reveals how private enforcement can be created without enabling authority devolving from the civil state or, once created,

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how it would not be subject to as much rent-seeking pressure as any public framework.

6. Everyone recognizes that neoclassical analysis relies on comparative statics, an approach that virtually demands use of the dichotomous framework. Less frequent is the recognition that Pareto optimality is also static, generating only a one-off improvement in utility; it can generate neither sustained trade nor innovation. Similarly, the Ricardian explanation for trade—differences in tastes and endowments—produces only a stable equilibrium, not growth. Adam Smith offers a much richer explanation for trade: it arises from the scale effects of specialization, and thus would arise even if there were identical tastes and resources. Such trade in fact enlarges the universe within which economic actors function. More critically, Smithian trade generates growth through innovation, in what is a potentially endless process. In this, Smith is much closer to Schumpeter than to his declared intellectual descendants, and his insights into the progressive enlargement of the market are underappreciated and underdeveloped.

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